

Public Hearing

NOTICE OF PROPOSED TAX INCREASE

- Call to Order 6pm
- Amy motioned to open public hearing
- Harriet second
- All in favor, no opposed

Attendance

- Town Council: Butch Johns (Mayor), Harriet Dickerson, Al Pulham, Sandy Kunkel, Amy McDonald
- Audience: Kerri and Frank Nakamura, JayDee Guymon, Paul Pazell, Ryan and Amber Kelly, Gene Gautieri, Anne Steen, Melissa Roloson, Matt Lucas, Gayle Wernsing
- Online: Scott Whittekiend, Jordan Hol, Tim Lunt, Shirely Card, Andrew Morse, Jared Marquis

Opening Comments

- Mayor Butch provided an overview explaining that the proposed property tax would be used only for emergency services.
 - EMS: \$35,000
 - Fire: \$35,000
 - Law Enforcement: \$30,000
- By law, this is the only area property tax revenue could be spent on.

Public Comment

- Each person had up to 5 minutes to comment (may be reduced to 3 minutes if demand is high).

JayDee Guymon

- Opposes the proposed property tax.
- Suggested that the Town should reconsider a local EMS and fire service district and annex the town into it—this was proposed in the past.
- Compared rates: Flaming Gorge Fire District taxes unincorporated areas at 0.00684%, which is about one-third of the proposed town rate. State statute caps the levy at that rate and does not allow increases under current law.
- He believes that rate is more affordable than what the town proposes.
- Having served on the Volunteer Fire Department for 19 years and responded to only 2 calls. EMS calls have also been minimal, and therefore does not see the need for the services and thereby the additional tax.

Anne Steen

- Asked if local police officers are EMS trained.
 - JD helped to answer that question stating that Jayden is basic-trained, unsure about Seth (county deputy), and that Jack Lytle is not current.
- Geno asked if fire volunteers are EMS-trained. Answer: Not currently, though there is interest.

Paul Pazel

- Asked about business contributions.
- Butch explained that businesses are taxed at a higher rate than residents.
- Kerri Nakamura helped to clarify that only primary residents of Dutch John get the 45% reduction. Businesses and non-primary residents do not.

Oran Hatch

- Asked how much money Daggett County collects from Dutch John residents for these services.
- Butch explained:
 - The county does not currently levy a municipality tax (though they could).
 - The county has not provided a breakdown of how collected funds are allocated, even after a GRAMA request.
- Paul Pazel responded that this was essentially “taxation without representation.”
- Butch acknowledged this, and encouraged residents to take concerns to the county commission. He further noted there are no MOUs between the town and the county for services.

Online Comment (Jared Marquis)

- Opposed to higher taxes and government spending. He would like to see decreased taxes and decreased spending by the Town as a whole.

Scott Whittekiend

- Asked about restrictions. Answer: State law dictates how these funds must be used.

Shirley Card

- Opposed to the addition of the property tax, stating that the high cost of living in Dutch John already makes it difficult for residents and discourages new families from moving in. They noted that while Airbnbs bring in revenue, they reduce the permanent resident population, which harms school enrollment and community diversity. Limited employment opportunities and high housing costs further deter potential new families, hindering the town's growth.

Ryan Kelly

- Argued that other funding avenues should be fully used before levying new taxes.
- Mentioned:

- TRT (Transient Room Tax): 15% should go to EMS.
- RDA funds (Redevelopment Agency) are underutilized.
- Community impact funds should also be explored.

Provided an overview of TRT and its potential uses. Acknowledged town–county tensions but believes this avenue should still be pursued.

Gene Gauterri

- Asked if the tax increase would go to the county. Butch emphasized that the revenue from the proposed property tax would remain in town.
- Geno suggested that as an alternative, fire volunteers should also train as EMTs, with training costs covered by the town.
- Asked what other town assets could be used more effectively.

Al Pulham

- Expressed mixed feelings.
- Loves the town and community but worries about the burden on property owners.
- Concerned that primary vs. secondary residence rules make the tax uneven.
Suggested county, state, and federal property owners should contribute more.
- Wants better EMS, ambulance services, and fire coverage but still feels the county should bear more responsibility.
Supports stipends for volunteers but worries about equity and sustainability.

Sandy Kunkel

- Agrees with JD Guyomoun that other funding options should be exhausted before raising property taxes.

Harriet Dickerson

- Supports the tax, believing that now is the right time to implement this.
- Notes that Dutch John is one of only four cities in Utah without a property tax.
- Said the lack of a property tax has caused the town to miss out on grants.
- Keri Nakamura reinforced Harriet's point, adding that local control requires local funding.

Butch Johns (Mayor)

- Answered additional questions:
 - Unincorporation would shift responsibility back to the county, but the county would likely impose its own municipal tax.
 - Believes population growth and development are coming (housing projects, motel, industrial projects). The town must be prepared with services.
 - State and federal representatives have said property tax revenue is necessary to qualify for additional grants and funding.
 - Emphasized the need for stable, guaranteed dollars to provide law enforcement and emergency services.

Frank Nakamura

- Stated the issue comes down to local control.
- Agreed that double taxation is a problem, but believes local tax is the only way to ensure accountability and reliable services.

Additional Clarifications/Comments

- If passed, the tax would begin November 2025, with funds available in Q3 of the fiscal year.
- Keri noted that property tax is revenue-driven (not rate-driven).
- Ryan Kelly reiterated that services are needed but questioned funding sources.
- Harriet asked the council to provide a financial statement for accountability.
- Sandy clarified: The county cannot impose a new municipality tax once the town has one, but they can raise existing county taxes.
- Butch emphasized: Returning to county control would not guarantee that taxes collected from Dutch John residents would come back to the town.
- JayDee noted that since 1983, the town has only added about 40 houses, and many residents do not want significant growth

Closing

- Meeting ended at 7:27 PM. Motion by Harriet, second by Sandy. All in favor.



Frank Nakamura

Deputy Clerk