

Should we be voting for higher property taxes when so many people are struggling to just get by? Taxes should NOT be raised when demands on [local food banks](#) are at record highs. A food insecure family or a senior on a fixed income could use the \$32.57 that will go to property taxes if this bond is passed to purchase 25 loaves of bread or 24 dozen eggs or 50 pounds of bananas. And the average homeowner is already paying over \$2,400 in total property taxes.

Won't small businesses that are just hanging on by their fingernails be especially hard hit by a property tax increase? Yes. While the increase for a homeowner is \$32.57 per year on a \$371,000 home, a business will pay \$59 per each \$371,000 of valuation. As businesses fail, the property taxes paid by homeowners and other businesses will have to be increased to make up for that loss of tax revenue.

Is it true that other fees and property taxes have already increased or are scheduled to increase? Yes, in order to comply with more rigorous waste water standards, the [Sewer District](#) is forced to increase fees by \$66 per year and raise property taxes by \$22 in 2021. That is on top of the \$24/year increase in Bountiful Power's Customer Charge plus a 10% increase in power rates for most users. When these are added to the \$32.57 property tax increase for the bond, the average Bountiful family will be paying well over \$100 more in taxes and fees.

What happens if the bond does not pass? Bountiful has the funds necessary to cover everything in the bond proposal without raising property taxes during these very difficult times. According to the [City Manager in 2018](#), the capital projects fund "has been steadily

increasing in balance over the past 12 years, and even if conservative revenues are projected over the next 10 years, there will still be a net increase in the balance." So, why not use that to pay for the land and improvements rather than implementing a property tax increase? During a recent public hearing the City Manager [acknowledged](#) that the City may still purchase the property even if the bond does not pass. And, if the City does not buy the property the School District will very likely retain it since it is currently spending [\\$400,000](#) to develop it into playing fields for the three local high schools for use beginning in the Spring of 2021.

But won't this property be sold to developers for high density housing if Bountiful does not buy it? It is clear that the School District needs this property for high school sports. If the bond does not pass, it can withdraw the property from the market and retain it for sports fields. The City is using the threat of high density housing as a scare tactic to pass the bond since the property is not even zoned for high density housing.

Hasn't the School District Violated its Fiduciary Duty? The [appraised value](#) of this highly desirable commercial acreage is \$4.6 million. The School Board has a fiduciary duty to the taxpayers of Davis County get the highest price possible, so why is it accepting \$3.5 million—\$1.1 million less from Bountiful? If the property is to be sold, shouldn't it be put out for competitive bid to maximize the benefit to the taxpayers?

Since the school district is already spending \$400,000 to level the land, put in an irrigation system and install sod so the playing fields will be ready for high school sports in the Spring,

why should we vote to raise property taxes by \$2.5 million to improve the property? We shouldn't—especially since City officials won't even tell us how the \$2.5 million will be used.

How much field time for other activities will be available after the School District's requirements for sports fields are met? The sale of the property is "[contingent](#) upon...an interlocal agreement allowing the seller to use portions of the fields for school sports" including "[significant](#) field space" for competition and practice fields. However, in order to find out what is in the interlocal agreement, Bountiful residents have to pass the property tax increase.

Why would Bountiful taxpayers pay millions for a property that the seller retains the right to use? That is a good question. Would you buy a house if the seller retained the right to use your family room and kitchen on a recurring basis? However, by making the sale contingent on the conclusion of an interlocal agreement that gives the seller ongoing use of the property that is what is happening in this case. If the School District has a critical need for sports fields, it should retain the property and then make an agreement with the City for Bountiful residents to use it on a space-available basis.

Have City officials listed specific projects and trails that will be improved? No. They say we have to pass the property tax increase and then they will work with the citizens to determine what will be done. There is no guarantee that pickleball courts, a skate park, playgrounds or other facilities will ever be built. And it will be up to the Trails Committee to recommend how the \$2 million for trails is used once the property tax increase passes.

I've heard that at least one person on the Trails Committee has exhibited [ageism](#) and disrespect for property rights? Unfortunately, that's true.

During a [public hearing](#) a member of the Trails Committee displayed ageism when the person said: "I'm not going to make any friends when I say this but can we please consider the average age of those speaking against this trail." The person also said that [private property](#) owners "are not workable, not agreeable, not going to give us an ounce" because they refuse to turn their property over for trails. If the person had said the same thing based on a person's race, religion, etc. they would no longer be on the Trails Committee. Apparently in Bountiful it is acceptable to marginalize older people who have worked hard to buy and improve their property.

Couldn't the Trails Advisory Committee raise private funds to improve trails just as veterans are doing for the [Bountiful Veterans Park](#)? Yes.

Rather than forcing those who cannot or may prefer not to use the City's trails to pay for improvements, trail users could raise the funds to cover the costs of improvements.

Isn't it true that the City's elected officials have a poor track record of controlling costs?

Unfortunately, yes. For example, the new Plaza and the City Hall renovation have both cost much more than originally announced. The Plaza went from [\\$3.5 million](#) to [\\$9 million](#) and the City Hall from [\\$6.5 million](#) to an estimated [\\$8 million](#).

Did the City really use taxpayer funds to help ensure that the bond passes? Unfortunately,

[\\$27,700](#) in taxpayer funds were paid to Y2 Analytics to gauge and influence public support for this bond. Y2 Analytics, which "has only lost

one bond election in [seven years](#)," tested "messaging and arguments...to determine which talking points and strategies are the most effective in a successful bond campaign." Citizens who oppose the bond are left to fight it using their own money. In addition, the Voter Information Pamphlet that was produced and mailed at taxpayer's expense was designed to favor passage of the bond.

Is it true that the City increases power rates and fees in order to supplement its budget? Yes.

City officials routinely [transfer](#) millions of dollars from the power fund to the general fund since this "transfer helps keep property taxes in Bountiful low." Just this year, power rates were [increased](#) to bring in an additional \$404,000 annually, the customer service charge increased 20% (\$24 per year) and in 2018 a \$2.00 flat rate street light fee was imposed (\$24 per year). Since transfers are used to fund governmental programs rather than the Power Department, they are, in effect, a hidden tax.

Since the City doesn't have any bond debt isn't that a good reason to pass this bond?

The City should not be incurring debt during the COVID-pandemic and raising taxes on people and businesses that are struggling to make ends meet. Just because someone has paid off their home isn't a reason to take out a loan on it.

Why are the proponents of this bond teaching our youth that the way to get what they want is to force others to pay for it through taxes?

Proponents of higher taxes and our youth both need to read Bastiat's [The Law](#) so they understand the difference between volunteerism and legal plunder.

BOUNTIFUL PARK AND TRAILS BOND

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Prepared by Ronald Mortensen, Ph.D., Co-Founder,
[CitizensForTaxFairness.org](#)