

SANDOVAL COUNTY BOND ISSUES

The five bond issues on the November ballot for Sandoval County residents would burden property owners, not all taxpayers, with additional debt. That is, general obligation bonds, like the ones listed below, are repaid via property taxes. Opponents point out that despite the state's significant financial reserves (including the Land Grant Permanent Fund, one of the top sovereign wealth funds in the country and the 30th largest in the world) and a record tax surplus, government authorities continue to push for more bond debt and tax increases.

Here are the bond questions as they will appear on the ballot in Sandoval County:

#1. General Obligation Bond for Library Facilities

Ballot Language: "Shall Sandoval County issue \$3.1 million in general obligation bonds for the purpose of funding library facilities and purchasing library resources?"

Opposition: While libraries can be valuable community resources, adding \$3.1 million in bond debt places an unnecessary burden on property owners. The County could seek state funding or other alternatives instead of relying on property taxes. Alternative funding was found when the county's residents rejected the bond for District Court Expansion.

Support: Libraries historically provide free access to books, digital resources, and community programs that promote education and lifelong learning. They also provide spaces for community gatherings and offer services such as job search help and public workshops.

#2 General Obligation Bond for Fire Department, Public Safety, and Telecommunications

Ballot Language: "Shall Sandoval County issue \$11.2 million in general obligation bonds to improve fire department water delivery systems, public safety, and telecommunications infrastructure?"

Opposition: Public safety is crucial, yet before approving this \$11.2 million bond, the County should exhaust all federal and state funding sources. Commissioner Heil mentioned that this bond would increase property taxes by \$11 per resident per year. While this might seem small, it adds up quickly, especially as residents have faced substantial tax increases in recent assessments.

Support: Upgrading fire department water systems and public safety infrastructure could enhance safety. Improving telecommunications for emergency services can lead to more timely and accurate public safety responses.

#3 General Obligation Bond for Animal Shelter

Ballot Language: "Shall Sandoval County issue \$7.5 million in general obligation bonds to design, construct, and furnish county animal shelters?"

Opposition: While animal welfare is important, with all the other inflation going on, some residents risk losing their homes due to rising property taxes. The County should consider public-private partnerships or working with non-profit shelters and rescues that are already part of the community. Helping people stay in their homes and reducing taxes will help animals not be surrendered because the owner can't afford their food or because they lost their home.

Support: This could improve the county's ability to care for abandoned or lost animals thus improving health and safety for these animals.

#4 General Obligation Bond for Fleet, Road, and County Facilities

Ballot Language: "Shall Sandoval County issue \$2.6 million in general obligation bonds for the maintenance and improvement of county fleet, roads, and facilities?"

Opposition: This comes at a time when the County just approved raises for the County Manager and the Assessor. While maintaining infrastructure is necessary, we need to prioritize fiscal responsibility. Sandoval County has options that don't involve increasing taxes for residents. The County should look to existing state funds and grants rather than increasing or extending debt burden.

Support: Improving road conditions can potentially reduce vehicle maintenance costs for residents. Fleet and facility upgrades may ensure improved public services delivered supporting long-term savings by reducing operational costs and enhancing service.

#5 Mill Levy for Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation

Ballot Language: "Shall Sandoval County implement a 0.25 mill levy to fund Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation efforts?"

Opposition: Conservation efforts are worthwhile, but property taxes are already high. Before levying additional taxes, alternative funding methods should be examined. Many property owners are struggling and additional levies will only deepen financial distress.

Support: Funding conservation efforts may help safeguard water resources and soil management. This could reduce future costs related to water shortages.

Overview on all Bond questions: Sandoval County recently managed to fund a district court expansion without voter-approved debt after that bond failed in 2022. Opponents of the bonds say they can do the same again to fund the above projects. Supporters of the bonds say the projects/services are needed and they don't mind additional taxpayer-funded debt that only impacts property owners.