City Treasurer Redefines Utility Tax at WISPPA Meeting

*Its All About U, The Utility Tax Takeaways*

As reported in [**SouthPasadenan.com**](https://southpasadenan.com/author/media/) **(9/11/18) and The South Pasadena Review (9/14/18)**

“UUT is a bad name for the city utility tax,” said City Treasurer Gary Pia during a presentation to some 20 members of Women Involved in South Pasadena Political Action (WISPPA) Sept. 8 at the Senior Center.

“Instead,” he said, “it should be called the South Pasadena Resort Fee.” The tax he was referring to is the city’s 7.5 percent surcharge on utilities. This is subject to repeal as Measure N at the Nov. 6 General Election. His presentation was titled, “It’s All About U, The Utility Tax Takeaways.”

“This tax pays for certain services we like and are willing to pay for incrementally to have that happen,” he added. It provides $3.4 million of a $27 million annual city budget, he said.

“If you break that down,” he said, “it comes out to about $135 per person per year.” In addition, he said, unlike property taxes and sales taxes, all of the UUT tax revenues go directly to the city.

During the presentation, he distributed a list of 20 potential cuts that would be necessary if the tax were repealed.

“I want you to play city manager,” he instructed. “Which cut would you authorize?”

One cut was to lay off three full-time firefighter/paramedics. Another was to eliminate summer camp and teen center programs. Another was to reduce the street and sideway repair program by more than $1 million. One person guessed it might be to eliminate the Community Services Department.

“In fact,” he said, “all 20 of the important programs and services will be cut.”

“Seniors and children will be disproportionately affected by the cuts,” Councilmember Diana Mahmud commented during the question-and-answer session. This is because in the Library and Community Services Department will be cut first in order to preserve as much as possible the police and fire department budgets.

“It all comes down to a question of what kind of a city do I want to live in?” Pia said.

Members of the committee working to keep the tax attended and made information materials available. Ed Donnelly, co-chair of the South Pasadena Public Services Committee 2018, invited members to donate, endorse the “No on N” campaign, volunteer, and sign up for a lawn sign.

Following the talk, the WISPPA membership voted unanimously to endorse the campaign to oppose the repeal of the UUT.