

# Fresno County voters to reconsider Measure Z in fall election

[fb.fresnobee.com/2014/06/11/3972890/fresno-county-voters-to-reconsider.html](http://fb.fresnobee.com/2014/06/11/3972890/fresno-county-voters-to-reconsider.html)

Marc Benjamin



A runner passes through the underwater viewing area at Fresno Chaffee Zoo's Sea Lion Cove during the California Classic Half-Marathon.

ERIC PAUL ZAMORA — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

The Fresno County Zoo Authority voted Wednesday to put Measure Z -- which provides funding for the Fresno Chaffee Zoo -- on the November ballot.

The measure would ask voters throughout Fresno County if they want to continue the one-tenth-of-a-cent tax that went into effect 10 years ago.

Revenue to pay for the ballot measure will come from the nonprofit Fresno Chaffee Zoo Corp. The nonprofit will pay up to \$75,000 to place the issue on the ballot. Election costs are estimated to be about \$45,000.

According to county ordinance, the zoo authority can pay for the election. Under the plan adopted

Wednesday, the nonprofit corporation will pay the authority.

The decision was necessary after Fresno County supervisors last week delayed placing Measure Z on the November ballot, questioning use of taxpayer dollars from Measure Z revenues for renewal of the one-tenth-of-a-cent sales tax.

The nonprofit corporation offered "non-tax revenue" to pay for the ballot measure. The corporation forwarded its proposal to the zoo authority, which oversees the zoo corporation's purse strings.

Fresno County Counsel Dan Cederborg examined if the zoo corporation could use Measure Z proceeds to place the issue on the ballot, and said there is nothing in state law to prohibit it.

Using tax revenues is "not a legal requirement one way or the other," he said Wednesday.

In 2004, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance that said "proceeds of the tax shall first be applied to reimburse Fresno County for the cost of the election and the proceeds of the tax shall be available to pay the cost for any election for a successor tax," said Kathy Crosby, the zoo authority coordinator.

Zoo authority board members said they felt language from the 2004 measure clearly states that Measure Z funds can be used to pay for a future measure.

"The taxpayers of this county voted on something 10 years ago that was very specific in the language ... in that ordinance," said Gerald Lyles. "For the Board of Supervisors to even think that they can usurp that, the vote of the taxpayers, I think is a little ridiculous."

Regardless of the language, authority Chairman Peter Herzog said supervisors had a problem with how funds could be used.

"I think this is a generous act by the (nonprofit) zoo board," he said.

Lisa Flores, a plaintiff in lawsuits against the city of Fresno and Fresno Chaffee Zoo Corp., said Measure Z and the zoo's expansion plans are a "very greedy money grab" by the nonprofit zoo corporation. All the lawsuits over the Roeding Park environmental document were dismissed except one case pending on an alleged change to park entryways.

The new Measure Z would also be a one-tenth-of-a cent sales tax to pay for additional exhibits that include large animals, such as hippos, and expand the zoo to 39 acres -- about one-quarter of Roeding Park, its ultimate build out if the renewal of Measure Z is passed.

About two-thirds of Measure Z pays for projects, such as Sea Lion Cove and African Adventure (now under construction) and another third pays for staffing. Measure Z will have generated \$100 million for the zoo by the time it expires later this year.

The reporter can be reached at (559) 441-6166, [mbejamin@fresnobee.com](mailto:mbejamin@fresnobee.com) or [@beebebenjamin](https://twitter.com/beebebenjamin) on Twitter.