

NEWS

Fargo area officials say sales tax vote 'imperative' to end catastrophic flood risk

FARGO - Public officials supporting Cass County's proposed half-cent sales tax for flood protection stood on the banks of the Red River this morning and urged voters to approve the tax or continue to risk a catastrophic flood.

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FARGO - Public officials supporting Cass County's proposed half-cent sales tax for flood protection stood on the banks of the Red River this morning and urged voters to approve the tax or continue to risk a catastrophic flood.

"It's inevitable, if we don't act soon, we're going to be fighting these things year in and year out," Cass County Commission Chairman Darrell Vanyo said.

To remind residents of the flood threat and need for the 20-year sales tax to fund a Red River diversion and other flood control measures, supporters wore small blue ribbons and said they will tie larger blue ribbons around trees throughout Cass County.

Vanyo, Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker, West Fargo Mayor Rich Mattern and former county commissioner Robbie Quick spoke in favor of the tax and tried to counter arguments made by its opponents, including Fargo City Commission member Dave Piepkorn, who came out publicly against the tax on Wednesday.

Former Fargo mayor Jon Lindgren and David Gust, co-chairmen of the No Blind Tax Committee, also attended the press conference and spoke out against the tax, saying voting against it won't delay the proposed diversion project.

Vanyo addressed the group's contention that the county is asking voters to pass a tax with no approved spending target. He noted that leaders in Fargo, Moorhead, Cass and Clay counties unanimously selected a North Dakota-side diversion as the locally preferred plan.

"While there are details to be determined, the need and the cost are there," Vanyo said.

Former mayor Bruce Furness also attended in support, along with several city and county elected officials and a couple of state lawmakers.

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