Voting ‘for’ or ‘against’?

How you feel about the half-cent sales tax that Rapid City residents will vote on Tuesday won’t matter if you don’t understand how to cast your ‘vote.’

A “for” vote opposes the tax and is to repeal it.

An “against” vote favors the tax and is to continue it.

Half-cent tax answer still

Rapid City residents should support continuation of the half-cent sales tax at the polls on Tuesday.

In November 1993, Rapid City voters approved continuation of the half-cent sales tax that built the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center.

On Tuesday, because of a petition drive to put the question to another vote, Rapid City voters are asked to reconsider their 1993 decision.

The answer should be the same on Tuesday as it was in 1993, except this time supporters of the half-cent sales tax vote “no” — that is, against repealing the tax.

The reasons for supporting the tax are the same as in 1993.

It’s not a new tax; it’s already being collected, and has been since 1972. Continuing it is relatively painless.

Discontinuing it would not significantly ease anyone’s tax burden. The tax is less regressive than other sales taxes because it isn’t collected on food or medicine or automobiles.

Without the tax, Rapid City risks being unable to raise the revenue needed to make the kind of capital improvements that keep the city progressing toward a better future for everyone. With it, and the projects it would fund, Rapid City risks stagnation.

Consider what the civic center has meant to our community. Besides offering residents a wealth of culture and entertainment, it draws people to our city to spend money in stores, restaurants, and motels and hotels. The civic center proves public capital expenditures can be good for a community’s vitality.

Without the tax, city property taxes would probably rise to pay for needed water quality improvements at Canyon Lake and for the city’s plans for complying with state solid waste laws. Higher property taxes would be a burden on many residents.

For? Against?

How you feel about the half-cent sales tax won’t matter if you don’t understand how to cast your vote Tuesday. A “for” vote opposes the tax and is to repeal it. An “against” vote favors the tax and is to continue it.

For paying such capital projects with a sales tax spreads the cost to visitors, who pay about half of the sales tax collected in Rapid City. That’s fair; those visitors add to the garbage collected, they need clean water, and they generally add to the need for government services. It’s fair that they contribute something to the city’s welfare.

Opponents argue that continuation of this tax gives the city a stream of revenue to spend however it pleases. That argument ignores the city’s history of responsiveness to the public. For example, if the city wasn’t sensitive to the public’s wishes, a plan to shoot deer within the city limits would be in the works today.

People objected to the plan, and the city is now exploring alternative solutions.

The projects the city will consider funding with this revenue were chosen by citizens. Before final decisions are made on specific projects, public hearings will be held. For each project, the public will have the chance to express its disagreement.

In 1993, continuing the half-cent sales tax was right for Rapid City’s future. It still is.

No means yes in 1/2¢ tax vote

A ‘no’ vote means you want Rapid City’s 1/2-cent sales tax continued; ‘yes’ means you want it scrapped.

By Mark Andersen

Vote “No” to continue the half-cent sales tax.
Vote “Yes” to kill it.
Among all the possible points of confusion over Tuesday’s special election on Rapid City’s half-cent sales tax, the chief one is:
No continues the sales tax.
Yes kills it.
Rapid City voters approved continuing the tax 5,039 to 4,059 on Nov. 9, 1993. At that time yes and no were reversed.
Tax opponents hope recent anti-tax trends will lead voters to reverse their decision as well this time.
Supporters say the development projects the tax would fund could help Rapid City prosper and deserve support.
No money has gone toward the projects yet.
Funds were to be available after Rushmore Plaza Civic Center bonds are paid in March.
The half-cent tax annually amounts to roughly $38 per city resident. However, it is paid by shoppers and tourists from outside the city.
Projects nominated to get some of $38 million to be raised by the tax over seven years are:
A plant to handle 1.5 tons of household chemicals dropped daily at the Rapid City landfill.
Fixes to water problems at Canyon Lake.
A loan fund to create high-paying manufacturing jobs.
A high-tech visitor center to lure tourists.
A museum to house four major history collections.
An indoor recreation center.
An indoor sports arena.
Producers either could be paid as the money comes in or by borrowing through seven-year bonds.
About $36.4.5 million would be brought in over the first seven years of the tax.
City aldermen will decide a priority for funding the projects. Opponents have said each project should be voted on separately. Supporters have said the Rapid City Common Council’s decision can be referred to a vote, if necessary.
Rapid City polling places will be open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday.