Who cares?
It's just tax money

By Larry Blote and Steven Blote
The Botes are Rapid City businesspeople. Larry is a former common council member. Steven is his son.

An old rancher once told me, "I think they government boys want to be cattle men, but they don't know anything about cattle." His point was that when government men try to do what professionals do, their results are usually a bust. The extension of the half-cent sales tax will raise millions. This money should be thought of as a tax, so we can all learn what happens when government competes with private businesses.

The main argument supporting Project 2012 (I call it "Project Tax and Spend," or "Ed's Great Adventure") is the success of the civic center. Now, who can argue with that? Let me just add that in 70 percent of the half-cent sales tax dollars will go to the civic center, so it supports it. In other words, the civic center is still a tax burden for us. I really like the civic center, but it is not a justification for what it is.

Let's look at some of the projects. An aqua park now is this idea of spending tax money. First let's list some of the costs. Projected to cost $1 million, they should be able to bring in at $3 million (remember the new $600,000 softball complex). They got that done for a mere $2 million.

Now the benefit? It would be a barrel of fun for the kids; it would provide city jobs for those not in your round school. It would help alleviate the overcrowding problem at the overcrowded water slide park, (you who drive by there know what I mean). And if we actually have a warm summer, operating revenue may make a dent in actual costs.

Indoor recreation center: This is a popular project the city wants to. The Reporter is dedicated to building one, the YMCA is one of two. If everything goes well we eventually will have three rec centers. Those of you will be a piece of the city's youth. Benefits will be in teen-age drinking, pregnancy, delinquency, and it should also help to improve grades! Considering the power of these centers we should petition to name them "parent's.

I really like the idea of a museum, especially a "world-class" type museum. I can see it will make money. But I just like a good museum. Also I like job development. I support tax breaks to lure new business to town as long as the council sees them as fit for our great city, getting customers, generating (and they are so big they are listed on the New York State Exchange. Now I like a challenge, but competing with these folks would bring new meaning to the word redundant.

Please understand, I am not a naysayer for its own sake. Government should assist business by providing a stable environment, not compete with it. Governments do not spend your money as you would spend it. Paul is a half-cent sales tax will cost you $10,000. Of course, they could have held it concurrently with another vote, but it's just tax money so who cares.

Remember now if any of these projects will do nothing. The cost of these projects and the expense in operating them will require tax revenue forever. Just like the Energizer bunny, it just keeps going and going and going.

A better tomorrow for Rapid City

By Jim Shaw
Shaw, of KOTA Radio & TV, is chairman of Citizens for Vision 2012.
Rapid City has a unique opportunity to say "yes" for civic progress by voting FOR the half-cent sales tax continuation on Nov. 8.
Twenty years ago, Rapid City voted for the civic center. Since then we've seen a tremendous expansion of activities and economic growth in our community because we have this fine facility.
Now, we can say yes to continued economical prosperity by voting for continuation of the half-cent sales tax. Remember, about 85 percent of the half-cent sales tax has been voted for by people living outside Rapid City, and the tax is not on food or medicine.
The mayor and city council have shown great faith and trust in the citizens of our fine community because they have put the decision in our hands. The sales tax continuation could have been voted for at a city council meeting instead. Instead, they have opened the process by holding numerous meetings over the past two years. Over 3,000 people attended and offered their ideas for Rapid City's future.
The citizens selected these projects: recycling, Canyon Lake restoration, river information center, Spirit of the Black Hills Museum, job development, and recreational facility enhancements.
Recycling will bring Rapid City into compliance with federal and state mandates and protect the environment for ourselves and future generations.
Job development. The Rapid Fund will develop new job opportunities for the people of Rapid City. It will assist Rapid City in its economic development efforts by aiding local expanding companies to create primary jobs and to attract new companies that will create additional jobs and opportunities for our citizens.
Canyon Lake restoration will improve water quality and expand recreational facilities.
A state-of-the-art visitor information center will promote Rapid City and the entire Black Hills as a destination point of travel by making visitors aware of the diversity of attractions available in our area.
The Spirit of the Black Hills Museum will display the collections of the Museum of Geology, State Archaeological Research Center, Black Hills Indian Museum, and Museum of Pioneer History. The exhibit is impact on local economy is conservatively estimated at about $15 million in increased sales annually and will generate more than $200,000 annual sales tax revenue for the city.
A variety of recreational opportunities will be expanded to promote Rapid City as a vital community while continuing the quality of life we all enjoy.
How should you cast your vote? You are among those of the thousands of people who have asked about the half-cent tax.
Are we giving the council a "check?" No, Citizens will always have open over futures spending because the city council could not publicly reveal the estimates of tax dollars for projects and funding. We can stop the tax any time with a simple majority vote by the city council.
Why isn't there a "burden" on the tax? How can it be removed? It can be removed by a majority of the city council at any time. It is subject to the repayment of bond obligation that cannot escape disposal.
Is this a "Black Hole" type of an ongoing tax? No, the duties from this tax can only be used to build a particular project. State law says that sales tax money must be used for operations and maintenance. Each of these projects has a variety of sources of revenue to cover their ongoing costs, like state, local, administrative, rental, and private donations.
Why isn't the tax going for a third high school? A third high school wasn't one of the highest prioritized projects in the Vision 2012 meetings. More importantly, the citizens have said they want to vote directly on the issue of a third high school. Please remember, that the school district cited in that area that is much larger than just Rapid City, and all citizens in the district should have a chance to vote on school funding.
Is there a "back door" attempt to build the aqua park? No, the aqua park is not one of the six identified projects.
On Tuesday, we have the chance to vote for Rapid City's future for a better quality of life. For a few cents a day, we can ensure a better tomorrow for all citizens in our city.
Ask yourself, is Rapid City better off if this tax is not continued? The answer is yes. It makes sense and it's the right thing to do.
Please vote FOR continuing our half-cent sales tax.