

Protest of Alderman Degener to Water Works Proposition.

To the Honorable, the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of San Antonio :

During a temporary absence from this city I was appointed chairman of a committee charged with the investigation of proposals made by a New York company to furnish this city with water works.

The committee closed their labors and embodied their views in an ordinance, before my return.

My appointment as chairman being on public record and nothing to show, that on account of my absence I could not participate in the deliberation of said committee, I deem it a duty towards myself and my constituents to ask that a memorandum to that effect be entered on the minutes of the council.

My objections against the ordinance, now under discussion, are in no wise against the project in view, to wit, "To Erect Water Works;" but directed entirely against the time chosen for entering into a contract with the Water Work Company.

The finances of our corporation are certainly not in a condition to justify its chosen representatives to burden the property-holders with an additional tax.

The State Taxes amount to	\$-75
The County Taxes	" -75
The City Tax	" -95

In the aggregate.....\$ 2.45

on every \$100 of real estate and personal property, a tax which has every prospect of being considerably increased for State and county, and must be increased 12½ cents for the city, if the \$75,000—to be annually expended for the use of 50 fire hydrants, are accepted as the outside limit of the expenditure to be incurred by the city, in case a contract is entered into with the water works company of New York.

It is, however, self-evident that fifty hydrants are entirely inadequate even to the present limits of that portion of our city, which is built so close together, that it can claim the advantages of costly modern luxuries, at the expense of such property holders, whose scattered location precludes the possibility of accommodating them with equal privileges.

Our city is six miles square, or thirty-six square miles, a great portion of which, though still primitive chaparral, is on account of its location valuable enough to contribute largely to our taxes. Another portion consists of isolated farm and garden settlements, and only about one square mile can be considered as having assumed the qualifications of a city, and it is this latter portion which has certainly equal claims to the advantages of such modern improvements as the income of the city would justify its representatives to put in to operation.

A mile is equal to 1900 varras; a street block, including the street, averages 140 varras; thus a square mile laid out in the regular manner, contains 28 miles of streets and 196 blocks.

It is this latter figure which has to be supplied with fire hydrants. To make the protection against fire complete, not less than one hydrant per block is requisite, which would swell the estimated annual outlay of \$75,000—to the enormous sum of \$30,000, and require a special tax of 50 cents on every \$100 of real estate and personal property, six millions being the estimated value of the real estate and personal property in our corporation.

It has been said that the erection of water works would reduce the insurance premiums to such an extent, as to fully compensate for the additional tax to be levied upon the real estate owners.

The amount of property insured in this city averages 1½ millions, on which a premium of 1¼ to 1½ per cent is paid, say \$25,000 annually.

Assuming for arguments sake that all the insured property is so close together, that fifty hydrants can protect the same, the premium must be reduced ¼ of one per cent to cover the outlay of \$75,000.

If 100 hydrants are necessary, the premium must be reduced one per cent.

If, however, a full square mile is to be protected by 200 hydrants, the entire insurance premiums falls short by \$5,000, against the special tax to be levied for the lease to be paid to the water works company.

It has further been said that the health of our inhabitants would be considerably improved if water works were erected. The mortuary lists, published by the city physician, show that San Antonio compares favorably with any city of the United States.

If we take into consideration that our city is situated on the banks of two running streams of the clearest spring water, and is covered by a complete net work of irrigation ditches representing a length of 20 miles, that with but few exceptions, the best kind of well water can be found at a depth of 14 to 25 feet; if we take further into consideration that one-half of the city revenue from the real estate tax this year is spent directly and indirectly, for watering purposes to wit: For new ditches, bridges made necessary thereby, for cleaning streets, widening, repairing and cleaning old ditches, for salaries, and so forth.

It certainly seems an unwarrantable luxury to levy a further special tax for additional water works; the more so, as improvements of a much more urgent nature, such as grading streets, building a permanent poor house, a hospital and jail, would be rendered impossible for many years to come.

In view of all these considerations I offer the following resolution:

Resolved, That the consideration of the ordinance, providing for the erection of Water Works be postponed until the financial condition of our city allows an additional expenditure, without increasing the taxes on the real estate situated within the city limits.

E. DEGENER.