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City Council

Resolution Concerning Potential Ballot Proposition Authorizing a 0.1% Increase in Sales and Use Tax for Criminal Justice Purposes

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Title

Resolution Concerning Potential Ballot Proposition Authorizing a 0.1% Increase in Sales and Use Tax for Criminal Justice Purposes

Issue:

Should the City Council add a public safety sales tax proposal to the November 6, 2012 ballot asking voters to raise revenue to sustain and enhance public safety services in the city?

Committee Recommendation:

The Finance Committee met on June 7, 2012 in a special meeting of the City Council to consider revenue options. The Committee unanimously recommended this action to the full City Council.

City Manager's Recommendation:

Move to approve the Resolution adding a ballot proposition to the November 6, 2012 election authorizing a 0.1% Increase in Sales and Use Tax for Criminal Justice Purposes.

Staff Contact:

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Ronnie Roberts, Police Chief 753.8409

Background and Analysis:

The City's financial position continues to decline. Now in the fifth year of flat or declining revenues, the City is once again faced with difficult decisions of continuing to cut programs and services or adding new revenues.

Over the past four years the City has eliminated a number of programs and services to the community, and cut approximately 50 positions (about 10% of the work force). In addition, major maintenance programs have been under funded and some needs, such as the replacement of the Washington Center siding, currently have no identified funding source.

In police services, the City has already eliminated the downtown walking patrol, ended participation in the regional narcotics task force, reduced traffic safety enforcement, plus cut a number of support positions. In

total 6 commissioned officer positions have been eliminated including a commander and lieutenants positions.

In 2013, programs at risk for being reduced or eliminated in the police department include the School Resource Officers and police crime prevention and volunteer programs (block watch, harbor patrol, explorers, graffiti coordination, etc). In addition cuts are possible in jail beds, elimination of community event support and closure of the west side police station.

Over the past several months the City has been examining projections for the 2013 budget and possible revenue sources. Early estimates project a \$2.4 million gap. The City Council met in study session on June 5 to learn more about pending cuts in city services and options for balancing the 2013 budget. Fourteen citizens were invited to give perspective about the City options.

On June 7, the City Finance Committee met in a special meeting of the full City Council. Upon conclusion of discussion, the Finance Committee concluded that the most urgent and immediate need was to forestall cuts in the police department and related services such as the City's victim's assistance program which is integral to the prosecution of domestic violence cases. The Committee also expressed support for restoring some resources to the downtown walking patrol and continued funding for the downtown ambassador program (currently starting up a pilot effort in August 2012)

On June 12, the City Council accepted the Finance Committee recommendation and directed staff to prepare a proposition for the November 6, 2102 ballot to consider raising the sales tax .01% for criminal justice purposes.

Attachment 1 includes a draft Resolution providing for the submission of a ballot proposition authorizing an additional sales and use tax at the rate of one-tenth of one percent.

Attachment 2 includes Guidelines for Local Government Agencies in Election Campaigns. The guidelines summarize the restrictions against the use of public facilities to support or oppose ballot propositions or individual candidates.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The City's Comprehensive Plan describes a vision for community policing in Olympia which includes an interactive, proactive role for law enforcement in the problem solving and problem prevention in neighborhoods, the downtown, schools, and commercial areas. To meet the goal of officers helping citizens to create security in the community sufficient resources must be provided to create the necessary visibility and partnerships. Currently the City lacks resources to fulfill this vision. Additional cuts in the police department and related services will take us further from the Comprehensive Plan goal of proactive law enforcement and could impact neighborhood security.

Options:

1. If the proposed resolution is acceptable in its draft form, pass the Resolution to place the Criminal Justice sales tax proposal before the voter's on the November 6, 2012 ballot.
2. Provide direction on amending the draft Resolution and direct staff to bring back the modified Resolution for final review and passage at July 24th Council meeting.
3. Do not pass the Resolution

Financial Impact:

The sales tax would raise approximately \$1.275 million on an annual basis. Given initial notice requirements for collection plus the fact there is a 2 month lag in collection of sales tax, a November 6, 2012 approval would result in about \$600,000-700,000 of additional revenue for 2013.

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The Finance Committee asked City staff to look for ways to make up the partial year collections to supplement the first year revenue lag. Staff is preparing options.