

Renewing Sales Tax Measure – Funding for Public Safety & Violence Prevention November 2022 General Election



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City Council
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Introduction

- In 2004, Santa Rosa voters enacted a 20-year dedicated $\frac{1}{4}$ cent sales tax, known as Measure O, to fund public safety and violence prevention programs. The measure, which raises approximately \$10 million a year, expires on March 31, 2025.
- The recommendation from staff is for the Council to place a renewal measure on the November 2022 ballot that would extend the $\frac{1}{4}$ cent sales tax for an additional 20 years.
- This renewal measure would continue the funding allocation as currently outlined in Measure O for police, fire, and violence prevention programs. Further, the proposed measure would update permissible uses for the extension of the sales tax, including mental health support teams and new geographic areas for enhanced police services.

Background

- Measure O provides dedicated funding for the Police Department, Fire Department, and violence prevention programs and services. The sales tax provides on an annual basis approximately \$10 million per year to these programs on a specific allocation of 40% to the Police Department, 40% to the Fire Department and 20% to violence prevention programs and services. Spending with Measure O funds must adhere to the Council-approved expenditure plan.
- Currently, four departments have certain positions funded by Measure O:
 - 16 employees in the Police Department. Specifically, those positions are one lieutenant, one sergeant, nine officers, two field and evidence technicians, one community service officer, one communications supervisor, and one police technician.
 - The Fire Department uses a portion of its Measure O funding to support 10 positions.
 - The violence prevention programs and services have 9 positions tied to Measure O funding, including 5 positions within Office of Community Engagement and 4 positions in the Recreation Division.

Background continued

- Measure O funds have allowed SRPD to provide increased patrol services, respond to local emergencies, conduct enhanced traffic enforcement and have an increased presence in the downtown area with a substation in the transit mall.
- SRFD has used Measure O funding to funds for the construction and relocation of fire stations and purchase specialized equipment such as new engines and radios. This work includes replacing outdated fire stations: 5, 10, and 11
- Measure O provides funding for the Santa Rosa Violence Prevention Partnership, innovative youth development programming that serves at-risk, low-income and homeless youth and families, and to the CHOICE Grant Program, which provides an average of \$650,000 to \$840,000 to local organizations supporting youth and families.

Analysis

- The proposed renewal measure would continue funding at existing levels for public safety and violence prevention programs. The proposed measure also retains the current allocation of tax revenues. A loss of dedicated funding could lead to staff and/or program reductions after March 31, 2025.
- Godbe Research conducted two surveys for the City and will provide a detailed review to the Council during the staff presentation. The average support from the recent tracking survey found that residents of Santa Rosa favor a renewal measure at 73 percent approval. A total of 668 residents participated in the tracking survey from June 9 to June 14, 2022.
- From April 2022 to present, staff met with the community groups and stakeholders, including internal City staff and public safety unions.

Analysis continued

- In addition to meeting with stakeholders, staff coordinated with members of the Council to hold town hall meetings in-person and virtually via Zoom. In total, the City had 6 town hall meetings.
- The common themes staff heard during our various meetings with the above groups were:
 - Overall support for the current programs and funding within the current Measure O framework
 - Support for mental health response being a component of future public safety funding, including inRESPONSE
 - Add Roseland as a specific neighborhood regarding police services
 - Support homeless services and prevention as allowable uses for future funding

Analysis continued

- Additional feedback continued:
 - We did hear some individuals support the current funding allocation, but we also heard from community members asking the Council to increase the amount for violence prevention
 - Downtown businesses supported the work of the Downtown Enforcement Team
- Common questions staff heard during these meetings were:
 - How are Measure O funds used in the community?
 - Who are the nonprofit providers within Violence Prevention Partnership?
 - What type of programs for youth are funded by Measure O?
 - How are the impacts of Measure O being measured?
 - Could inRESPONSE be added to the future funding tax measure?
 - What is the current sales tax rate in Santa Rosa? Can we afford another tax increase?

Analysis continued

- Due to the fiscal impacts of current Measure O funds and a potential expiration of those funds, staff strongly recommends the placement of a ballot measure for this upcoming general election.
- Staff also recommend maintaining strict fiscal accountability measures in the renewal measure, including a Citizens Oversight Committee tasked with ensuring that tax revenues are spent in accordance with the voter approved measure.
- A renewal measure would give the community the opportunity to ensure the critical funding remains in place to prevent wildfires, prevent the closure of fire stations, provide crucial staffing in place for public safety and violence prevention programs, and provide resources for at-risk youth and their families.

Recommendation

It is recommended by the City Manager's Office, Finance Department and Communications & Intergovernmental Relations Office that the City Council, (1) introduce an ordinance to amend chapter 3.26 of the Santa Rosa City Code to extend a quarter-cent Transaction and Use Tax to fund public safety and violence prevention programs and to update permissible uses of the tax revenues, and (2) approve a resolution ordering the submission of a ballot measure to seek voter approval of that ordinance at the November 8, 2022, General Municipal Election and directing related actions.

QUESTIONS?