



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Willows City Council Declares Fiscal Emergency
& Places 1% Sales Tax on March 2024 Ballot**

Willows, CA – At the October 10, 2023, Council meeting, the Willows City Council, with a 4-1 vote in favor, declared a fiscal emergency and authorized staff to place a 1% sales tax measure on the March 2024 presidential primary election ballot.

“I am very concerned about the City’s fiscal future. We need to find a path forward that, in the short term, balances increased revenues with controlled spending; and in the long term, strives for greater self-reliance to sustain critical city services. In a nutshell, the city needs to grow its population in order to sustain itself for the long term. Right now, however, we need immediate revenue to remain solvent beyond 2024,” commented Mayor Richard Thomas.

The City already faces an ongoing estimated deficit of nearly \$.5 million that will continue to grow to a projected \$1.6 million with the proposed increase in the law enforcement contract with the Glenn County Sheriff’s Office.

Vice Mayor David Vodden said, “we need the sales tax in order to provide more services and benefits that will improve our quality of life - more funding to do more things to make City of Willows and our lives better! The tax increase is an immediate means to opening up doors and generating more opportunities to better our community and city!”

Regardless of whether the City contracts with the Glenn County Sheriff’s Office or the City of Willows re-establishes its own law enforcement program, the City does not currently generate sufficient revenues to provide adequate and sustainable law enforcement services long term, as well as other vital city services, including fire, emergency medical, public works, permitting, finance, library and administration.

When asked to comment, Councilmember Gary Hansen stated, “The Council’s number one duty and obligation to the citizens of Willows is to provide effective and adequately funded law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical, and public works services. With rising costs and inflation, the city has no other choice but to consider a sales tax measure.”

With the current proposed cost increase for law enforcement services, the City will have no General Fund Reserve and cashflow by 2025 requiring deep cuts in city services to balance the budget starting in the second half of 2024.

“By placing this measure on the ballot, we have given Willows voters the opportunity to help ourselves and to decide our children’s future. We cannot function with current revenues. If we want to stay incorporated, this is our best opportunity to fix the city and ‘pay ourselves’ for the quality of life we all deserve and want,” commented newly appointed Councilmember Evan Hutson.

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