

May 26, 2020

**AGENDA ITEM**

**TO:** Hon. Mayor and City Council Members

**FROM:** Wayne Peabody, Interim City Manager

**SUBJECT: FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES SALES TAX MEASURE**

**SUMMARY**

The current staffing and equipment of the Willows Fire Department is entirely inadequate to provide safety and emergency medical services to the citizens of Willows. It is imperative that additional funding be provided to meet the needs of this department and protect the people and property of the City of Willows.

**SITUATION**

**CURRENTLY:**

1. There is only one (1) firefighter on duty at a time. This situation is inherently unsafe for both the people of Willows and the firefighter. Generally, the firefighter on duty must wait for volunteers to respond, in order to provide effective fire suppression and medical services. This is because most critical firefighting and medical activities require at least two trained responders to perform.
2. Willows is experiencing a significant drop in volunteer firefighters. Nationally there has been a massive reduction in local volunteerism, and Willows has not escaped this trend.
3. The people of Willows currently receive sub-par and unacceptable emergency medical services. The Willows area suffers a significant lack of Advanced Life Support (ALS) care in the pre-hospital setting. Currently Willows emergency medical services personnel wait up to 45 minutes for ALS care to arrive because of an ambulance shortage in the region. 45 minutes is the difference between life and death in many cases.
4. Lack of up-to-date medical equipment and tools, as well as an aging firefighting vehicle fleet hamper the department's efforts.

**IF SALES TAX MEASURE IS PASSED:**

1. The Willows Fire Department will be able to provide a higher level of medical care than currently available, by staffing a minimum of 1 Firefighter/Paramedic trained to the ALS level. This will directly improve survival rates of fire victims and the critically ill.

2. The Willows Fire Department will exponentially increase its capability to provide effective fire suppression and emergency medical services with the addition of four (4) firefighters trained to the paramedic (ALS) level, thus improving the safety of the people of Willows and First Responders.

3. Apparatus, as well as firefighting and medical equipment can be updated to provide greater safety to the people of Willows and those first responders who serve them.

4. The Willows Fire Department will be less reliant on the highly variable level of response from the Volunteers.

**IF THE SALE TAX MEASURE IS REJECTED:**

1. The people of Willows will continue to receive only basic life support (BLS) emergency medical care. This lower level of emergency care will result in un-due suffering and increased likely hood of severe injury and death of Willows constituents.

2. Willows Firefighters will continue to respond to emergency calls for service as they always have, and do their best to protect the people of Willows from injury or death with limited manpower, vehicles and tools currently available while awaiting for the arrival of advanced life support from elsewhere.

3. Without additional funding, it is likely that the Willows Fire Department will no longer be able to staff the department 24/7, placing a dangerous and unrealistic expectation of adequate fire and emergency medical service from the Willows volunteers.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

1. There will be no additional financial burden to the City of Willows.

2. The sales tax, if enacted, will raise approximately \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per year.

3. If not enacted, the City Council will be burdened with attempting to find additional funds for the Willows Fire Department if it wants to continue a staffed department providing any level of fire safety and emergency medical services.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a **RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILLOWS:**  
**(A) ORDERING SUBMISSION TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF THE CITY, A MEASURE RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A THREE-QUARTER CENT SPECIAL SALES, TRANSACTIONS AND USE TAX, (B) AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SUBMIT BALLOT ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE MEASURE, AND (C) DIRECTING THE CITY ATTORNEY TO PREPARE AN IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS OF THE MEASURE.**

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Respectfully submitted,

Wayne Peabody  
Interim City Manager

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Attachments:

1. RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILLOWS:  
(A) ORDERING SUBMISSION TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF THE CITY, A MEASURE RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A THREE-QUARTER CENT SPECIAL SALES, TRANSACTIONS AND USE TAX, (B) AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SUBMIT BALLOT ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE MEASURE, AND (C) DIRECTING THE CITY ATTORNEY TO PREPARE AN IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS OF THE MEASURE.

2. AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILLOWS ADDING CHAPTER 3.15.085 TO TITLE 3 OF THE WILLOWS MUNICIPAL CODE IMPOSING A ONE-HALF OF ONE PERCENT SALES, TRANSACTION AND USE TAX ENTITLED "PUBLIC SAFETY SALES TAX MEASURE" TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TAX AND FEE ADMINISTRATION INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR CITIZENS' OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY.