



# MEASURE U

## LOCAL SALES TAX ELECTION – November 8, 2016 Frequently Asked Questions #1

### TEXT OF BALLOT MEASURE U:

*“To continue funding, that cannot be taken by the State, for general city services including preserving the quality of life of Sonoma, and to provide funding for essential services such as police, fire and emergency medical services, street maintenance, affordable housing, parks and other general community services, shall the City of Sonoma extend the existing voter approved sales tax of one-half of one percent for a term of 5 years, with all funds to be spent locally?”*



*Local Sales Tax funds are vital to Public Safety programs such as our Police K-9 unit (Officer Dickie & Deputy Jeff Sherman, K-9 handler)*

### **What is Measure U?**

Measure U is a request to voters to renew the existing ½ cent sales tax (approved by the voters in 2012) which currently funds vital City services. It requires majority voter approval to continue to be collected after September 2017. Absent this tax, the City will lose approximately \$2.2 million per year in tax revenue to the General Fund.

### **What City services would Measure U continue to support?**

Measure U local sales tax will continue to be a major revenue source in the City's General Fund. The General Fund accounts for all core City services including 911 emergency response, police patrols, fire and ambulance services, street maintenance and sidewalk repairs, park/Plaza maintenance, support to local programs serving youth and seniors, affordable housing, emergency shelter, code enforcement and other City services.

### **Will the State be able to take this money from Sonoma?**

No. By law, locally approved sales taxes cannot be taken away by the State. All revenues from local tax measures stay in Sonoma to continue to provide municipal services. Unlike many other current and prior revenue sources (such as general sales tax, redevelopment property tax, gas tax, cigarette tax, alcohol beverage tax, and Vehicle License In-Lieu), Measure U revenue is sheltered from State intervention because it is a local tax.

**How is local sales tax different from General State sales tax?** Local sales tax .5% (Measure U) revenue is remitted to the City at 100% of all sales tax collected; General State sales tax is apportioned to State, County and Special Districts and the City only receives an amount equal to 1% of the total 8.25% charged.

### **If approved, how long would Measure U sales tax last?**

The renewal under Measure U will extend the tax for an additional 5-year period through September 2022.

### **How has the City spent current local tax revenues since 2012?**

Since 2012, the City was diligent in maintaining its promise to the voters and using the resources provided by the original sales tax measure wisely to provide funding to support essential services such as was stated in the ballot measure. Overall, our local sales tax has provided a stabilizing local economic foundation for the City's provision of public services and contributed to funding the expenditures illustrated below:

#### Police

- Continued level of police enforcement services including Chief, 2 sergeants, 10 deputies, 2 community service officers, 1 administrative assistant, and part-time administrative clerk.
- Police K-9 Program (Officer Dickie).
- Partially funds School Resource Officer.

- Partially funds School Crossing Guard Program
- Code Enforcement Program (initiated February 2016)

#### Fire & Emergency Medical Services (EMS)\*\*

- Completion of agreement with Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District establishing the Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority including daily staffing on fire apparatus including 3 engine companies, 2 ambulances, and a command vehicle.
- Purchase of New Fire Engine replacing aging apparatus

\*\*Due to the upgrades made to equipment and organization, the City received the highest rating from the Insurance Services Organization (ISO rating) of a CLASS 1; this will have a direct benefit to property owner's insurance rates.

#### Street and Road Maintenance

- Replacement of City Street Lights with LED Lighting to improve lighting and reduce future electric costs (approximately \$70,000 annually) and further addressing the Climate Action 2020 Plan.
- Slurry Seal Projects 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2016 to maintain street surfaces (no potholes)
- Annual Sidewalk Repairs (\$50,000 per year)
- Major Street & Signal and intersection Improvements at Broadway, Napa and Leveroni Rd
- Reconstruction & Repaving on Sections of Church Street, Curtin Lane, Studley Street, Oregon Street, Sixth Street, Seventh Street, Patten Street, Mallet Street, and Napa Road; including the construction of ADA-compliant curb ramps at intersections.
- Completed Improvements at Depot Park
- Chase Street Bridge Replacement (ongoing)

#### Public Works

- Addition of in-house City Engineer / Public Works Director creating savings for consulting engineering firm
- Stormwater Specialist to comply with State requirements
- Graffiti Abatement Program under Public Works

#### Redevelopment Expenses

- Absorb Administrative Expenses from former Redevelopment Agency including legal costs as well as staff costs in City Manager's Office, City Clerk's Office, Planning Department and Finance Department.
- Absorb contracts including lease costs for Sebastiani Theatre, agreement with Visitor's Bureau, and Economic Development and Business retention services provided by Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce (\$125,000 annually)
- Provide utility costs and support for Emergency Shelter
- Payment of CREBS bond for solar panels at Police Department and Public Works

#### General Community Services

- Replacement of City Hall Bell Tower including addition of hourly chime.
- Replacement of Historical Directional Sign on City Plaza
- Reinstated annual transfers for internal service programs such as the Long Term Building Maintenance to fund larger building repair and maintenance needs.
- Updated telephone system to improve service to the public.
- Established Business Loan Program including forgivable loans for physical improvements to businesses in the City (this program was completely eliminated with the loss of Redevelopment)
- Establish Special Events Coordinator position to assist in Plaza event management
- Establish stand-alone Finance Department to improve transparency and timeliness of financial reporting.
- Completion of Circulation Element and activities related to Housing Element of General Plan.
- Increase in funding for Community Activities including:
  - Establishment of Community Fund Grant Program (1.5% of designated General Fund revenues including Measure J which would be reduced if Measure U were not passed)
  - Increase in total funding for non-profit organizations providing services to community from \$123,200 in Fiscal Year 11/12 to \$194,385 in 16/17.
  - Provided \$15,000 annually for "City-Sponsored" days for use of the Veteran's Building.
  - Establishment of Pool Fund for Scholarships for the Sonoma Splash program
  - Increase in funding for Cultural and Fine Arts Commission Activities

#### **What if Measure U is not passed?**

Local sales tax (\$2.2 million) comprises 12.9% of all General Fund revenue which would be immediately lost if Measure U is not renewed by the voters. The result would require staff to make recommendations to the City Council on budget cuts to City services to reduce costs in an amount equal to \$2.2 million.