

NEWSLETTER

Issue 210 * August 2015

City voters will get the opportunity to consider a 2% Criminal Justice Sales Tax that would result in elimination of the 4-year Public Safety Property Tax Levy and elimination of the Jail Services Utility Fee

The number one goal of the City of Grants Pass is to “Keep Citizens Safe.” Effective and efficient law enforcement services in Grants Pass requires multiple local criminal justice programs working together.

The City’s Public Safety Police division is one of four major programs that are part of the local criminal justice system. Other local criminal justice programs that serve Grants Pass include the Adult Jail, Juvenile Justice program, and prosecution services through the District Attorney’s office.

Historically, the City has provided Police, Fire/Rescue, and related support services, while Josephine County has provided jail, juvenile and prosecution services.

For many years, the City Council provided the necessary funding for Police and Fire/Rescue services through property taxes. The City uses the entire permanent property tax plus a supplemental, short-term, local option property tax levy approved by Grants Pass voters. For the last two years, the City also has used a Jail Services Utility Fee to rent 30 jail beds for use by City Police.

Criminal justice programs operated by the County have seen significant budget cuts since 2012, due to changes in the County’s federal funding.

Recommended Sales Tax Rate: 2.0%
Anticipated revenue: \$8,050,000

The sales tax would provide revenue to:

Eliminate the Grants Pass Police/Fire, 4-year property tax levy of \$1.79 \$5.0 million/yr

Eliminate the Jail Services Utility Fee and provide jail services for use by City Police \$1.4 million/yr

Re-open and fully operate the Juvenile Justice Shelter/Detention building \$1.4 million/yr

Supplement criminal prosecution services (District Attorney’s office) \$ 250,000/yr

The 262-bed Adult Jail was built in 2000 and currently is able to house a maximum of 100 local inmates and another 30 inmates contracted by federal law enforcement.

The 30-bed Juvenile Justice Shelter/Detention building has been closed since 2012. The County rents 3 beds in another county to house juvenile offenders.

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The sales tax will fund jail services at the Adult Jail for use by City Police and eliminate the Jail Utility Fee.

The Juvenile Shelter/ Detention building was built in 1999 and was closed in 2012. The detention section can hold up to 14 teen offenders, suspects and parole violators. The shelter section can provide housing, counseling and education for up to 16 troubled teens.



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The District Attorney's office is not properly staffed to prosecute all the criminal cases generated by City Police.

City and County residents have voted four times over the last three years on different property tax levy measures that would have restored funding to jail, juvenile and prosecution services. The total vote all four times was not in favor. The majority of people in City voting precincts passed the measures all four times.

In light of City voters' desire to fund local jail, juvenile and prosecution services, the City Council researched ways to fund these services and ways to share the costs of the local criminal justice system with all the users of the local criminal justice system.

The Council's research led to the creation of a Criminal Justice Sales Tax Task Force to make recommendations for a local sales tax program. The task force recommended many unique terms that would best serve Grants Pass and its local criminal justice system. For example, only the first \$1,000 of any one sale is taxed, so the tax on a \$50,000-car would be \$20.

The Task Force's recommen-

dations were used to create a City ballot measure that will go to city voters on Nov. 3, 2015.

If approved by voters, the measure will:

- Eliminate the four-year Public Safety local option property tax levy of \$1.79 per \$1,000 of assessed value. For a single family home in Grants Pass with an average taxable assessed value of \$155,050, the property taxes would be reduced by approximately \$277 per year.
- Eliminate the City's Jail Services Utility Fee, saving about \$34 per year per household.
- Implement a 2% sales tax to support the local criminal justice programs beginning July 1, 2016. Sales taxes would vary based on taxable purchases. Please see the sales tax exemption list at the right.

If approved by voters, the sales tax will:

- Allow the City to provide Police and Fire/Rescue services without a short-term local option levy;
- Provide Adult Jail services for use by City Police;
- Allow the Juvenile Justice Shelter/ Detention building to reopen; and
- The District Attorney's office can prosecute more criminal cases.

Major tax exemptions

- No tax on food for home consumption (no tax on unprepared food)
- Large dollar items: Tax only applies to the first \$1,000 of any single sale (a cap of \$20)
- No tax on prescription medicine
- No tax on items that already have a separate state/local regulatory tax (gasoline, alcohol, utilities, hotels, others)
- No tax on goods shipped outside of Grants Pass.
- No tax on business wholesale inventory purchases
- Numerous other exemptions

Other terms

- Reporting businesses will earn a tax rebate to help cover cost of administering the sales tax.
- The tax rate cannot be increased without another vote of the people.
- Revenues from the sales tax are restricted for use in City Police, City Fire/Rescue, Adult Jail, Juvenile Justice and prosecution services.



Last summer, this walking path at Riverside Park was paved so bicyclists could use it.



This summer, bicycle lanes at two Parkway intersections were re-stripped white and green.

City works to make walking, bicycle travel safer, easier

Whether we travel by foot, bicycle or motor vehicle, we all want get where we are going safely. The City Bikeways and Walkways Committee supports and encourages safe cycling and walking.

To improve safe passing of bicyclists by motorists, the committee recommended adding “sharrows” and bike lanes on City streets.

Sharrows are street markings placed in the center of a travel lane indicating that a cyclist is allowed to use the full lane. Sharrows are used on narrow streets and where no bicycle lanes exist.

As pavement markings wear, they need to be re-stripped to be effective. The Streets Department recently re-stripped several locations, including the intersection of “M” Street

and Parkway; the intersection of Beacon Drive and Parkway; and “F” Street behind Fred Meyer and Walmart.

New cycling and walking paths and other facilities are added every year. Last year, the City installed a bikeway/pedestrian path through Riverside Park that loops through the park connecting at East Park Street and SE Vista Drive.

This year’s projects for pedestrians and cyclists include:

- A new trail through Morrison Park;
- Connecting pathway between Parkway Elementary School and Reinhart Volunteer Park; and
- A pathway from Riverside Elementary School to Portola Drive via Eckstein Park.

The City has a map of bicycle lanes and paths around town. It is available at City Hall, Chamber of Commerce and other locations in town. The map also can be downloaded at www.grantspassoregon.gov.



A SHARROW

Lost Creek Dam meeting

Grants Pass is in the Lost Creek Dam drainage area. In the unlikely event of a significant water release from the dam, City residents could be affected.

The Army Corp of Engineers, which controls the dam, is offering an information session on September 22, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Ann Basker Auditorium, 500 NW 6th St., Grants Pass.

Who can help with housing discrimination?

Federal and state fair housing laws prohibit discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, family status, or national origin. The laws apply to the sale, rental, leasing, and the financing of land and housing.

The Fair Housing Council of Oregon is a non-profit advocacy group. The complaints it receives mainly concern: reasonable accommodations

for a disability (60%); source of income (20%); and family status (20%).

Only 1 in 10 acts of housing discrimination are reported, sometimes because people do not know their civil rights. Sometimes those violating fair housing laws do so unintentionally.

If you believe you have been denied housing because of discrimination, please call the Housing Council’s hotline at 1-800-424-3247, ext. 2, between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Or, send an email to: information@fhco.org.



Council looking at urban renewal to encourage economic prosperity

The City Council has appointed a citizen task force to assist in the formation of an Urban Renewal Plan for Grants Pass.

Urban renewal has been used by cities since the 1950s to get rid of blight and spur economic growth. Blight includes land that has inadequate streets and utilities, and areas with rundown buildings.

“We do have some areas that are blighted with poor condition of buildings,” task force member Colene Martin said.

For example, Martin named the “Y” intersection where 7th Street, Williams Highway and Redwood Highway all meet, and the north I-5 interchange, as areas she would like to see improved.

Improvements in the urban renewal area are funded through “tax increment financing.” Here’s how it works:

- The tax-assessed value of property in the area is frozen.
- Taxes from the frozen base continue to go to the city, county, schools and other taxing bodies.
- Increases in taxes over the frozen base go toward the urban renewal projects.
- When the urban renewal plan is

done, the tax base is unfrozen and all taxing jurisdictions benefit from increased tax revenue of the higher assessed value of the area.

- The improvements make a better area for residents.

The City’s last urban renewal plan was a great success. That 868-acre district had an assessed value of \$75.5 million in 1988; by 2001, the area was assessed at \$150 million.

That plan included 66 projects, such as new water lines, sewer lines, storm drains, and a reservoir for drinking water. Streets were added, extended and upgraded. Baker and Tussing parks were developed so people could use them. The pedestrian bridge was built.

The Urban Renewal Task Force will start to work in October. The task force is being assisted by Elaine Howard Consulting. Howard has assisted cities around Oregon, from Bend to Gold Beach, and Astoria to Ashland.

For more information about urban renewal or the task force please contact Assistant City Manager David Reeves at 541-450-6000.

Urban Renewal in GP



Union Avenue before



Union Avenue after



Agness Avenue before



Agness Avenue after



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City Council meetings begin at 6 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Council Chambers, 101 NW “A” Street. The meetings are televised on Cable Channel 183 and posted on-line at www.grantspassoregon.gov.

City councilors and staff talk about local issues on radio station KAJO (1270 AM) at 9:30 a.m. on the 1st and 2nd Tuesday of every month.