


Agenda Report Reviewed by:
City Manager: 

**CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM**

Meeting Date: January 19, 2021
To: Honorable City Councilmembers
From: Mayor Una Glass
Subject: Letter of Support for Sonoma County West County Transient Occupancy Tax Measure (March 2021 Election)
Recommendation: That the City Council Discuss and Consider Authorizing the Mayor to Prepare and Send a Letter of Support to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors for the West County Transient Occupancy Tax Measure (March 2021 Election)
Funding: Currently Budgeted: Yes No N/A
Net General Fund Cost: \$ none

Account Code/Costs authorized in City Approved Budget AK (verified by Administrative Services Department)

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

This item is for City Council Discuss and Consider Authorizing the Mayor to Prepare and Send a Letter of Support to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors for the West County Transient Occupancy Tax Measure (March 2021 Election).

BACKGROUND:

On November 30, 2020, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors voted to adopt an ordinance amending Article III, Chapter 12 of the Sonoma County Code to establish the West County Transient Occupancy Tax Area and increase the transient occupancy tax in that area by 4%.

As this ordinance was adopted, it will be placed on the ballot at the March 2, 2021 election and will become effective July 1, 2021 if it is approved by a two-thirds majority of the voters voting on the measure.

DISCUSSION:

Measure B is the West County Transient Occupancy Tax. It will raise approximately \$2.7 million annually, exclusively for use in West County to support sustainable paramedic emergency medical and rescue services and West County education needs. Half of the 4% increase in TOT will support West County fire and rescue services and the other half will benefit education in West County.

The Ballot question is "To address tourism impacts on West County communities and paid only by guests, shall the measure be adopted to increase the transient occupancy tax in West County by 4% for hotels and shortterm rentals, to support sustainable paramedic emergency medical and rescue services provided by local fire agencies, and to support West County schools and education, raising approximately \$2.7 million annually, with all funds exclusively used for West County, effective until amended/repealed?"

The nationwide recession that came about due to the COVID-19 pandemic has had severe negative economic impacts on not on the City and County of Sonoma, but the State and Nation as well. COVID 19 has wreaked havoc on all walks of life and as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shelter-in-place orders, revenues for the County and City have been critically impacted.

The City and County have been facing fiscal challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic and related steep economic downturn only exacerbated the problems and created long-term and ongoing budget deficits. The City appreciates and values the economic benefits of tourism. However, this has also created an additional burden on the City to include our emergency responders. This measure that proposes a tax on tourists/visitors would help to provide additional local funding to the County which would in turn hope to help the City of Sebastopol with funding needed to maintain our critical emergency services.

It is proposed that a sub-committee will be formed and that the funds will be distributed based on a West County committee/Board of Supervisors approval. As Mayor, I strongly encourage and recommend a City of Sebastopol City Council have a seat on this committee.

Fifth District Supervisor Lynda Hopkins will be in attendance to answer any questions related to the Measure.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, staff anticipates receiving public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report. Such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of this item.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to schedule meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal cost associated with this item tonight.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council City Council Discuss and Consider Authorizing the Mayor to Prepare and Send a Letter of Support to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors for the West County Transient Occupancy Tax Measure (March 2021 Election).

ATTACHMENTS:

None