

GV WIRE

Will Clovis Ask for a Tax to Keep Pace With Public Safety?

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Clovis residents want public safety. But, are they willing to pay extra for it?

The Clovis City Council weighed options Monday on how to pay for more police and firefighters. At previous meetings, both the police department and the Citizens' Advisory Committee said staffing levels need to increase in the fast-growing city.

The city council discussed whether voters would have an appetite for another tax. An increase in the city's hotel tax (from 10% to 12%) was approved by 70% of voters last November.

"When people say, 'I already pay enough,' I totally get that," Councilman Drew Bessinger said. "(But) I don't want to be on the council that oversees us losing the safest city in the Valley."

A 1% local sales tax in Clovis would yield \$25 million a year, according to a staff presentation. A parcel tax of \$200 a year would produce \$7.2 million.

If the city seeks a dedicated tax for just public safety, it might require two-thirds approval from voters to pass. General taxes, which can be spent on any purpose, need a simple majority.

"I would be disinclined to want a general tax," Councilwoman Diane Pearce said.

Pearce, Vong Mouanoutoua, and Bessinger said a specific tax is the preferred method over a general tax.

A potential Clovis public safety tax might not be the only item asking for money. Next year's ballot could include countywide tax questions for transportation (Measure C), and improvements at Fresno State (Measure E).

The Clovis City Council took no action but indicated it may hire a consultant to provide funding options.

Also in Politics 101 ...

- Valadao leads a Congressional delegation on a water tour.
- Affordable homes are planned for southwest Fresno.
- Hinton Center closing.

Valadao Will Host Water Storage Tour

Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford, will lead a delegation next week to tour the Friant Dam and dairy fields.

Several California Republicans are scheduled to join Valadao, including John Duarte, R-Modesto, and Tom McClintock, R-Roseville. Bruce Westerman, R-Arkansas, the chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, is also scheduled to attend.

The tours, scheduled for Tuesday, April 11, will be capped off by a hearing about water legislation, the WATER for California Act (introduced by Valadao), and the FISH Act.

Last month, Valadao led a tour of Tulare County dairy farms affected by recent floods.

Affordable Housing

More affordable housing is coming in the form of single-family homes in southwest Fresno.

The first project will be on a 20-acre vacant lot owned by the Successor Agency, a unit of city government, at the corner of Florence and Walnut avenues. Future phases will include 125 affordable and market-rate houses.

Nonprofit Self-Help Enterprises will build 14 three- and four-bedroom homes. Mortgages could be reduced to \$800 a month, through public and private programs, Fresno City Councilman Miguel Arias said.

"The west Fresno community has been asking for single-family, affordable, and market-rate homes as it is already saturated with multifamily public housing. So this is our response and us keeping our promise to west Fresno," Arias said.

Qualification is based on income, 80% of the area median of \$56,000, or approximately \$45,000 or less.

The total project is \$4.3 million, with \$1 million coming from city funding sources. The remainder comes from state and private grants.

Arias says future home-buying programs will expand to the middle class.

Hinton Center Closes, Looks to Build New Facility

The Hinton Center, a nonprofit-run community center in southwest Fresno, is shutting down and hoping to rebuild.

Arias says the center has 40 years of deferred maintenance rendering it unsuitable for renovations.

“There are so many different maintenance needs for the facility, that they’re better off closing the facility to ensure the public safety and then launching a fundraising campaign to build a new center from the ground up,” Arias said.

The city, Arias said, will negotiate with the Hinton Center board to use the parking lot. The center is across the street from Hinton Park, on Fairview Avenue, north of Church Avenue.