

August 27, 2021

RE: Potential City of Wyoming May 2022 Ballot Initiatives

On August 16th, the Wyoming City Council approved the first reading of an ordinance that would place an income tax proposal on the May 2022 ballot. The second reading of this ordinance and a resolution to put a corresponding proposal on the ballot that would decrease City of Wyoming property taxes will be considered at the City Council's September 20th meeting.

The two proposals will be tie-barred, meaning if one does not pass, neither will pass. If approved as presented, the proposals would allow the city to levy an income tax of up to 1% on residents and 0.5% on non-residents and would lower the city's property tax millage from 11.8947 to 5.0000 by 2024.

Taken together, these proposals would generate an additional \$6 million in revenue annually to the city. This revenue is needed to support additional public safety staffing and funding for capital investment in the city's parks system. More information on each of these needs can be found below.

City Council has been engaged in discussions regarding these proposals for the last several months but at this point in time neither have been approved to be put on the ballot. If approved by the City Council on September 20th, more information on these ballot proposals will be shared and the City will engage in a months-long communications campaign to inform voters.

Defining the Need

These proposals are designed to fund needs over three functional areas: Fire, Police and Parks, each of which are explained below.

27 Firefighter positions

These additional positions are necessary to provide the resources the Fire Department needs to respond to incidents within the City of Wyoming. Here are some key facts that support the need for these additional positions:

- The current fire suppression staffing is 6 positions (18%) less than in 2003. Over the same period of time, calls for service have increased 44% (from 4,655 in 2003 to 6,684 in 2019).
- The city has historically relied on paid on-call firefighters to supplement full time firefighters but, following a national trend, the city has seen the number of paid on-call firefighters drop significantly due to the increased training requirements for firefighters. The City current has 7 paid on call firefighters, compared to 38 in 2003.

community • safety • stewardship

CITY COUNCIL

Sheldon DeKryger

John Fitzgerald

Kent Vanderwood

Marissa Postler

Robert Postema

Sam Bolt

Jack A. Poll, Mayor

- Current minimum staffing does not provide enough Wyoming firefighters on any shift to safely enter a structure fire. They either have to enter the building without back-up, putting their lives at unnecessary risk, or wait for back-up, which could result in unnecessary loss of property or life.
- In order to respond to all calls for service, the City of Wyoming is heavily reliant on mutual aid support from surrounding communities. Wyoming received mutual aid from other communities 133 times in 2020 but only provided mutual aid to other communities 40 times.

If these positions are added, minimum staffing per shift will move from 7 to 13. Additional staff will allow the City to staff the two vacant fire stations, reduce reliance on mutual aid from surrounding communities and reduce response times. Also, additional staff will reduce the amount of time when no City of Wyoming firefighters are available to respond to calls. In order to support these additional Firefighter positions, the current command structure will have to be expanded. To accomplish this end, current positions will be reclassified into new Battalion Chief, Lieutenant, and Equipment Operator positions. Start-up costs such as turnout gear, uniform, vehicles, and other equipment will be required before these positions are hired. Additional capital costs to make necessary improvements to fire stations are currently being developed.

14 positions in the Police Department

Additional positions in the Police Department are proposed across four divisions but all share a common goal of shifting focus from a predominantly reactive approach to a proactive approach. By dedicating these positions to proactive patrols, community outreach, state/regional task forces and crime analysis, we provide our Police Department with more tools to prevent crime from happening rather than relying primarily on response to crime after it occurs. Here are some key facts that support this need for these additional positions:

- Due to the volume, complexity, and severity of our calls for service, police officers have less time for proactive, self-initiated activities.
- Over the last five years, our City has seen a steady increase in violent crime. In 2020, for example, we experienced 65% more violent crimes than were reported in 2015. We also experienced a record number of homicides and “shots fired” calls in 2020.
- Current minimum staffing of 6 or 7 officers on a patrol shift means that many of our calls for service have to wait for officers to become available.

community • safety • stewardship

CITY COUNCIL

Sheldon DeKryger

John Fitzgerald

Kent Vanderwood

Marissa Postler

Robert Postema

Sam Bolt

Jack A. Poll, Mayor

- Our current police staffing of 1.2 officers per 1,000 residents continues to fall below the national average of 2.4 and the average of other cities our size which is 1.5.
- The City of Wyoming ranked No. 7 out of 533 municipalities in the state with a total of 46 pedestrians killed in traffic-related crashes from 2015 to 2019.
- In every annual survey, community members place concerns about traffic safety at the top of their list. In 2020, we had 2,047 traffic crashes which resulted in ten fatalities.
- Caseload for detectives has almost doubled since 2008 but only one additional Detective Bureau position has been added since that time.
- We currently have only one detective assigned to a multi-jurisdictional drug task force. This is clearly not enough to address the opioid problem that we face in our community.

If these positions are added the City would increase number of assigned officers on target shifts will allow the department to conduct more self-initiated investigations, neighborhood patrols and checks on schools, businesses, and property. Dedicate one detective to cellphone/internet/computer crimes, one to Metro Enforcement Team or Drug Enforcement Agency Task Force and one for general casework. Additional officers will work in business/retail/hotel districts, apartment/mobile home parks and neighborhoods. Provide a staff member embedded in the Police Department dedicated to crime analysis to allow the Department to better utilize data to guide decision-making and prevent crime from happening.

\$600,000 Additional annual capital funding for Parks

This additional funding will provide a sustainable, annual investment in the City's Parks system, as outlined in the Parks Capital Replacement Plan. The current dedicated Parks & Recreation millage is not adequate to support both operational and capital needs of the Parks & Recreation Department. Instead, in 2017 voters approved the use of the Library Capital Fund for Parks projects. In FY22, only no in capital improvements were funded from the dedicated Parks & Recreation millage.

community • safety • stewardship

CITY COUNCIL

Sheldon DeKryger

John Fitzgerald

Kent Vanderwood

Marissa Postler

Robert Postema

Sam Bolt

Jack A. Poll, Mayor