

## One Cent Sales Tax Ballot Measure

With the exception of the general fund, revenue received by the City is typically earmarked for specific uses and cannot be reallocated were a need were to arise. Just like in our households, after the essentials are covered there is occasionally a “surprise” expense – the water heater goes out, your car breaks down, etc. As you can imagine, similar surprises occur at the local government level but due to restrictions, the City is not always able to react and pivot fast.

I am in favor of pursuing different ideas for increasing general fund revenue. However, I do not support the one-cent sales tax increase on the November ballot because I do not believe the City and Council have fully justified the need for the increase. There is no specific spending plan, the description of what it could be spent on is vague, meaning it could be spent on anything.

However, if voters say yes to the sales tax increase this November, a thorough and comprehensive needs assessment for the City with public input should be conducted before the funds are put to work. During the City Council meeting which authorized the placement of the tax measure on the ballot, the Deputy City Manager stated that, through a survey, citizens identified their top priorities for the funds as: fire and emergency response, crime prevention, safe public spaces, road safety, economic development, and youth and team recreation.

As a resident of Manteca myself, I agree with my neighbors who participated in this survey. On-the-ground knowledge is invaluable and, paired with a needs assessment, could help fine tune the usage of this new revenue source so it is put to its highest and best use in continuing to keep Manteca safe, prepared, and headed in the right direction.

If the Sales tax ballot measure had been restricted similar to what follows, I would have been more inclined to support it. If the new sales tax revenue is not limited by Section 3.09.150 of the Manteca Municipal Code, I would roughly split the funds 50% for Police and Fire, 30% for street maintenance, and 20% for recreation. As reinforced in the survey, public safety is high on everyone’s list – especially mine.

The Manteca Police Department only recently returned to the staffing level achieved when I retired 12 years ago. If approximately half the proceeds were used to increase staffing and equipment for Manteca’s Police and Fire Departments, this could potentially fund roughly 11 Police Officers and 11 Firefighters at top step with overtime. These additional positions could enable the Fire Department to fully staff a new station or add personnel to existing apparatus and allow the Police department to add two officers to each shift, 24 hours a day. A combination of sworn and non-sworn personnel could also mean adding more School Resource and Community Service Officers, freeing Police Officers up for more pressing duties. Additional Officers could be assigned to serve our homeless population. The addition of a Crime Prevention Officer or Crime Analyst could be explored as the Police Department currently does not have one.

The deferred maintenance of our streets that has been happening for years could be addressed by the sales tax increase. Streets badly in need of repair or maintenance could receive the attention they need – increasing road safety and pride in our community. However, we should be cautious to also investigate why funds earmarked for road maintenance have not been sufficient to cover the community’s need. We first need to fix financing and budgeting problems at the City before increasing the sales tax and providing an estimated \$12 million annual Band-Aid.

We cannot talk about safety without talking about our youth – our future. Sales tax dollars could be put to work bolstering existing youth recreation options or adding new programming. Facilities desired by Mantecans, such as a Community Center and/or Aquatics Center, could be financed, and the funds used to make the annual payments on the bonds. Or, the funds could be accumulated, and the facilities constructed once there were enough funds. Supporting positive and safe places for our youth is vital to the overall health of our City.

Thinking about the possibilities and positive impact the additional revenue to the City's general fund could have on Manteca fills me with hope.

City Staff related that they had been working sales tax increase for at least a year. Yet, there is no written staff report about the justification, spending plan, or even general ideas on what could be accomplished with the funds. If the current City Council is asking citizens to fork over more of their paycheck at the check-out line, should not there at least be a "rough draft" plan on how it will improve the lives of residents?

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