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FAQ-Frequently Asked Questions

on Proposed Public Safety Five-Year Local Option Levy

BACKGROUND

Hood River County’s Board of Commissioners has placed a proposal for a Public Safety Five-Year Local Option measure on the May 2020 ballot asking voters to consider a levy of \$0.78 per \$1000 assessed value of property beginning with Fiscal Year 2020-21. Revenue from this measure would be placed in a dedicated account for public safety services to support all aspects of public safety and criminal justice including, but not limited to:

- Law Enforcement Patrol
- Criminal Prosecution
- Criminal Investigations including Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and sale of Illegal Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Courthouse Security

Visit www.co.hood-river.or.us for details and for proposed Ballot Title and Explanatory Statement in English and Spanish.

1 Does this levy proposal include all of the services proposed in the unsuccessful Public Health and Safety levies of the Spring of 2019?

No. The proposed Public Safety Levy does not include all of the services contained in the Public Health and Safety measures proposed in Spring 2019. If the proposed levy passes, County services funded in the 2019-20 budget will be stabilized at current levels for the five-year levy period.

2 If the levy passes, how much property tax would be assessed?

Property owners would pay a rate up to \$0.78 per \$1000 assessed valuation. **The tax levied on the estimated MEDIAN ASSESSED VALUE of a residence of \$203,755 would be \$159.93 per year (or \$13.24 per month). Look at your property tax statement for TOTAL ASSESSED VALUE.** For example, if your TOTAL ASSESSED VALUE is \$192,250, your annual tax would be approximately $192.25 \times 0.78 = \$149.96$.

3 If approved, will I be able to see in the County’s budget where the levy money is being spent?

Yes. Money from this proposed levy will be placed into a separate account. Revenue accounts in the County’s General Fund are allocated to specific departments. 100% of the Public Safety levy will be allocated to public safety expenses during the five-year period.

4 Who will review use of this money and make sure it is spent correctly?

The County’s budget is reviewed by County staff, the Sheriff and the County’s Budget Committee which includes five citizen members, and then recommended to the Board of Commissioners for approval. In addition, expenditures are reviewed by an external auditor and the budget is sent to the State of Oregon. Finally, the County makes its annual budget available on its website, so interested citizens can view how this money is being spent.

5 What will happen if this levy passes?

Services provided by Hood River County would receive more stable and dependable funding in order to maintain current services levels (established in Fiscal Year 2019-20) in all county departments, including Public Safety, Public Health, Veteran Services, OSU Extension and more.

6 What would happen if this measure does not pass?

If the proposed measure does not pass, the levy would not be assessed. Services provided by the County would be further reduced or eliminated. Final determination of what services would be affected would be made by the Budget Committee and the Board of Commissioners. Items under consideration would include but are not limited to:

- Further reductions in Public Safety including patrol, and criminal investigations.
- Closure of the Public Health Department.
- Elimination of Funding for the Oregon State University Extension Service.
- Elimination of Funding for The History Museum of Hood River County.
- Elimination of the Veteran’s Service Program.

7 When will 24/7 law enforcement patrol be restored?

If the proposed Public Safety Levy passes, staffing levels would be restored as soon as possible. Hiring, certifying and training new deputies is a process that would begin immediately upon passage of the levy. Public safety services levels would increase each year between 2020 and 2023.

8 What County services have been reduced or eliminated as a result of County revenue shortfalls?

Changes since 2016

- Law enforcement patrol reduced to less than 24-hours per day.
- Park closures of three day-use parks.
- GIS support (webmap) reduced by 50%.
- Discontinued funding support for Tourism Promotion.
- Reduced public hours in Community Development.
- Reduced public hours in Records & Assessment.
- Eliminated Weed & Pest program.
- Reduced funding for Juvenile Rehabilitation and Counseling.
- Unable to replace vehicles needing replacement.

Changes before 2016

- Library closed, formation of Special District.
- Reduction in staffing support for school nursing services.
- Elimination of Economic Development Office.
- Elimination of one Parks employee.
- Elimination of Multi-department Receptionist/Office Assistant.
- Elimination of Juvenile department staff support and Juvenile Tracker.
- Elimination of staff support in Parole & Probation.

9 What is the County’s permanent tax rate?

How does it compare to neighboring counties?

Hood River County’s permanent tax rate is **\$1.42** and is the 9th lowest permanent tax rate of all 36 counties in the State of Oregon. Neighboring counties’ permanent tax rate are: Wasco County **\$4.25**, Multnomah County **\$4.34**, and Clackamas County **\$2.98**.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOOD RIVER COUNTY PROPERTY TAX COLLECTIONS

Only about 10% of total property taxes collected by Hood River County Assessments goes to Hood River County. The other 90% is collected for other taxing jurisdictions* such as:

SCHOOLS

Community College • Columbia Gorge ESD
School Local Option • School Bond

OTHER JURISDICTIONS IN COUNTY

911 Communications District
Cities of Hood River or Cascade Locks, local Fire and Water districts
Port Districts • Hood River Valley Parks & Rec
Other 7% HRC Transportation District • Urban Renewal districts
Sanitation District (Odell)

* Distribution is approximate and may differ with specific districts, bonds or levies.

Representative Distribution of Tax Revenue Collected in the County 2019-20*

