



DATE: May 28, 2021
TO: City Council
FROM: Paul Fetherston
RE: November 2021 Ballot Initiatives – Request for Additional Polling

During the May 25, 2021 Work Session regarding the reauthorization of the Keep Greeley Moving sales tax as a part of the November 2021 ballot, there was a consensus of the City Council to request that staff research the cost, timeline and any other pertinent information for conducting a poll to gauge support for an open space/ natural trails and areas tax. This information is presented in response to that request.

Background and Information:

During its May 14, 2019 work session, City Council received a presentation on the City's Natural Areas and Trails funding strategy which identified the potential for a new 0.25 sales tax for open space. As a part of the presentation, the Culture Parks and Recreation Department highlighted the following results of a community survey completed in 2018. (Note: The community survey is not the equivalent of a poll of registered voters.)

Question: There are many ways that the city could generate additional funding to address three different areas, although it does not have enough funding to do it now. The following is a list of several potential sources for additional funding. For each one, indicate if you had the opportunity to vote on a measure to increase funding for some of the specific projects, would you vote Yes in favor or No against that proposal:

	Definitely Yes	Yes
Increasing taxes by extending the existing three-tenths of one cent sales tax and use it for improvements to roads, public buildings, parks and open space	28%	69%
Increase taxes through a new sales and use tax of one-tenth of one cent and use it for conserving wildlife habitat, working farms, and lands along the Poudre River, as well as parks and trails	28%	61%
Increase taxes through a new sales and use tax of one-quarter of one cent and use it for conserving wildlife habitat, working farms, and land along the Poudre River, as well as parks and trails	28%	58%

After consideration of the information presented, the City Council determined that it was not time to move forward with a tax increase primarily because a specific plan was not in place that outlined the financial needs for and uses of an open space tax.

In June 2020, the City conducted polling relative to a reauthorization of both the Food Sales Tax and Keep Greeley Moving Sales Tax. At the time, the poll also included the following question regarding support for a natural areas and trails/ open space tax:

“Finally, let’s assume for a moment that in addition to the two tax renewals we’ve been talking about, you were also considering a third proposal. This proposal would create a new, dedicated sales tax of one quarter of one percent (0.25%) on all purchases in order to fund the acquisition and maintenance of natural areas and trails around Greeley. If you had to decide today, would you support or oppose this proposal?”

The polling results were presented to City Council during its June 23, 2020 Work Session. The specific polling results regarding the natural areas and trails/ open space are listed below:

	Support	Oppose	Undecided
Support/ Oppose	4%	5%	
Probably	22%	11%	
Definitely	22%	26%	
TOTAL	48%	42%	10%

At that time, it was the consensus of City Council to not move forward with a natural areas and trails/ open space sales tax initiative.

The cost to conduct a poll through the services contracted through a competitive process with Strategies360 ranges from \$19,000 - \$33,000 depending upon the number of questions asked and duration of the poll. Strategies360 has developed a tentative timeframe to complete the poll which is provided below – including an anticipated date for presentation of results to City Council:

	Timeframe
Polling in field	Starting June 28
Presentation of Polling Results	July 15

As discussed during the May 25, 2021 work session, moving a new sales tax item forward on the November 2021 ballot poses challenges such as the following:

- Cause potentially negative impacts on the Keep Greeley Moving renewal effort;
- A new sales tax would typically move through a body such as the Citizen Budget Advisory Committee for its recommendation. Such a referral could still happen with compressed timeframes for analysis and discussion; and
- The success of any tax initiative is positively correlated to the existence of and support from a citizen support committee. At this time, no committee is in place for this specific issue and the time to effectively communicate is very short.

In addition, it is important to note that during the February 2020 City Council retreat, the Council established a strategic work program item “Create comprehensive City services funding

strategy”. This effort is intended to engage in analysis and planning for all needs, and align the short and long term needs with the appropriate revenue sources (align specific tax with for specific services such as KGM for roads). Conducting additional polling focused on this concept and that includes questions about all needs such as open space, roads, facilities, public safety, etc. If this concept is supported by Council, staff’s recommendation is to complete this survey in 2022 as was originally contemplated.