



AGENDA REPORT SUMMARY

Meeting Date: May 23, 2023

Subject Results of the Updated Community Priorities Survey

Approved by: Gabriel Engeland, City Manager

Attachment(s):

1. Godbe Research Presentation of Survey Results

Initiated by:

City Council

Previous Council Consideration:

The City Council formed a Neighborhood Public Safety Facility Subcommittee and has had various meetings associated with this topic.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact in receiving this report.

Environmental Review:

Not applicable.

Summary:

- The City engaged its longtime polling professional Godbe Research to conduct an updated community priorities survey to evaluate resident opinions on the performance of the City, perception on quality of life, and a funding solution to support public safety services and facilities.
- Results indicated residents are very happy with the performance of the City (75%), are satisfied with quality of life (87%), but were split on supporting a potential ballot measure to support public safety services and facilities where support ranged from 45.8% to 50.2% in favor, within the margin of error for the survey for a 50% +1 requirement measure, and far below the 66.67% required for a special purpose measure.
- As a special purpose requirement measure is far below the threshold of viability, and the city has not come to agreement on whether or not the State's actions and national fiscal climate warrant a declaration of Fiscal Emergency, staff recommends the City Council decline placing a ballot measure at an upcoming election for voter consideration.
- Residents or other interested parties have the option of qualifying a public safety tax at a future election with a simple majority requirement, but this option is not open to government.

Reviewed By:

City Manager

GE

City Attorney

JH

Finance Director

JE



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Discussion:

The City engaged long-time polling professional Godbe Research to conduct an updated community priorities survey to evaluate resident opinions on the performance of the City, quality of life, constituent priorities, and a potential funding solutions to address public safety services and facilities. Surveys were completed in March and April of 2023 and included a survey instrument of 21 minutes and was offered in both internet and telephone formats. 407 interviews were completed to achieve results that were statistically valid.

The following services were top of mind for residents in the survey:

- Upgrading Fire Stations to accommodate modern firefighting and life-saving emergency medical equipment;
- Updating police/ fire stations to ensure operations during an emergency/rapid emergency response time; and
- Providing a police mental health response team for non-violent 911 calls, including suicide prevention, homelessness, and substance abuse
- Providing a modern and earthquake safe emergency dispatch center to ensure communications between police, fire, and paramedics remain operational in a disaster.

The thematic elements below tracked closely with the services that scored the highest in the survey, which were centered on emergency response, neighborhood safety, and local control:

- **Emergency 911 response times:** *For victims of heart attacks, strokes, accidents and other emergencies, seconds can be the difference between life and death. ...[We must]...help ensure fast emergency response times.*
- **Emergency Communications:** [We must]... update and maintain police facilities and technology so we can maintain 9-1-1 dispatch, crime fighting and investigation services, keep neighborhoods safe, and ensure operations during an emergency
- **Updates for Emergency Operations:** *Los Altos fire stations have not had adequate updates. ...[and need additional funding to]...ensure that they are operational during earthquakes, wildfires, and storms.*
- **Local Control for Local Needs:** Los Altos [must have] control over local funds for local needs - allowing Los Altos to be self-reliant and requiring that our tax dollars be spent for Los Altos residents. No funds can be taken by Sacramento.



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The ballot question **recommended** by Godbe research should the city elect to move forward:

To improve public safety services/ facilities, such as:

- **upgrading fire stations/ life-saving medical equipment;**
- **ensuring operations during emergencies/ rapid response;**
- **providing response team for non-violent 911 calls;**
- **ensuring earthquake safe dispatch center can remain operational in a disaster;**
- **maintaining neighborhood police patrols;**

shall the City of Los Altos measure be adopted adjusting the existing utility users tax to a 7% rate, until ended by voters, providing an additional \$3,100,000 annually, that cannot be taken by Sacramento, including oversight?

For comparison, the ballot question as tested in the survey was:

To improve public safety services/ facilities, such as:

- updating fire stations to ensure operations during an emergency;
- maintaining neighborhood police patrols;
- providing safe/ secure police facilities;
- meeting seismic standards at police/ fire stations; and
- ensuring police operations back-up power during storms;

shall the City of Los Altos measure be adopted adjusting the existing utility users tax to a 7 percent rate, until ended by voters, providing an additional \$3.1 million dollars annually, that cannot be taken by Sacramento, including oversight?

The potential measure was also tested with a Parcel Tax mechanism, which and similarly started and stayed within a 50%+1 margin of error after information was shared, but was more volatile in response to factual information. Neither option tested above the margin of error for a 2/3 majority that would be required for the City to place a special tax on an election. The 50%+1 threshold would only be presented as an option for the City if a general purpose measure was placed on a regularly scheduled municipal election ballot. A general, non-special tax was not tested and should not be considered.

Residents or other interested parties maintain the ability to qualify a special tax for a ballot measure on an election at the 50%+1 threshold.



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Additional information on ballot measures and description of the types of taxes can be found at:
www.losaltosca.gov/electioninfo

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the City Council receive the presentation and report from Godbe Research on the results of the commissioned survey.