



AGENDA ITEM ANALYSIS

Project/Issue Name: 21-12 An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Republic, Missouri, Calling an Election on the Question of Imposing a City Sales Tax to Fund Public Safety; Designating the Time for Holding Said Election; and Authorizing and Directing the City Clerk to Give Notice to the County Clerks of Said Election.

Submitted By: David Cameron, City Administrator

Date: March 23, 2021

Issue Statement

Consideration of an Ordinance calling for a vote regarding a sales tax to fund public safety.

Discussion and/or Analysis

In 1981, the citizens of Republic voted upon themselves a 1% General Fund Sales Tax that served in addition to Real Property Tax and Personal Property Taxes. In 1986, the community voted to “trade-off” Personal Property tax in lieu of a new half percent Street Improvement Tax. In 2005, the City of Republic consolidated with the Village of Brookline and doubled the geographic area of the City to 24.57 square miles. Since 1981, Republic’s population has increased from 4,485 to approximately 18,000 and the City continues to grow and expand while the demand for City services, specifically for public safety, is greater than ever before.

The current City of Republic 1% General Fund Sales Tax funds the operations of twelve (12) different divisions/departments in addition to making the annual payments on long term debt for the construction of Fire Station 1 and the remodel of Fire Station 2. As per RSMO 94.510, cities in Missouri are allowed up to 2% in General Fund Sales Tax to fund general operations.

The City of Republic is unique in that it does not collect personal property tax or collect revenues in real property tax to fund the Fire Department. Further, our Fire Department is the only department in our area, other than Springfield, that does not operate under a Fire District with a designated funding source through a property tax levy and real property tax. The City of Springfield utilizes a level property tax provision and other provisions to assist with Public Safety funding, whereas our community has no assistance from personal property taxes. Therefore, our current 1% sales tax carries more liabilities than any other city in our region.

Below is a summary of the current challenges the City of Republic is facing in public safety (Republic Police Department and Republic Fire Department) personnel and funding:



Republic Police Department

Staffing Summary

- The City of Republic currently employs 24 full-time police officers when fully staffed.
- The International Association of Chiefs of Police recommends 2 full-time officers per 1,000 residents for a city of our size.
- Given the current estimated population of Republic is +/- 18,000, industry standard would mean a total of 36 full-time police officers is recommended.
- The City of Republic is proposing to add 12 full-time police officers to address the shortage per industry standard.

RPD Quick Facts

- No new police officers have been added to our team since 2006.
- Eliminated two (2) positions in 2020 to address regional pay deficiency.
- In comparison regionally, the City of Ozark (population – 19,400) employs 37 full-time police officers and the City of Nixa (population – 22,515) employs 42 full-time police officers.
- Between January 1-March 4, 2021, the Republic Police Department has been “blacked out” a total of 38 hours that has been accounted for and numerous other short-term instances of 20 minutes or less that haven’t been officially reported.
- Retirement benefit amongst the lowest in the region.
- Subsidized out of Street Department budget in the amount of \$600,000 due to allowable language in State Motor Fuel Tax & State Motor Sales Tax.
- Detectives currently working 50% higher caseloads than the preferred number. Total person crimes at 87 and total property crimes at 85.
- Below is a sampling of when there have been only 2 or 3 officers on duty:
 - December 2020: 3 Officer Shifts – 25; 2 Officer Shifts – 3
 - January 2021: 3 Officer Shifts – 24; 2 Officer Shifts – 15
 - February 2021: 3 Officer Shifts – 16; 2 Officer Shifts – 4



Republic Fire Department

Staffing Summary

- The City of Republic currently employs 20 full-time fire fighters when fully staffed.
- The National Fire Protection Association recommends 15 fire fighters respond to a common residential structural fire. The Republic Fire Department typically responds with 6 and relies upon auto aid and mutual aid from neighboring departments.
- The City of Republic is proposing to add 14 full-time fire fighters to address the shortage per industry standard.

RFD Quick Facts

- No new fire fighters have been added to our team since 2007.
- Eliminated one (1) position in 2020 to address regional pay deficiency.
- In comparison regionally, the City of Ozark employs 30 full-time fire fighters and the City of Nixa employs 33 full-time fire fighters.
- Since January 1, 2021, the Republic Fire Department has been “blacked out” on 27 separate occasions totaling varying from time durations of 4 minutes to 3.5 hours.
- Retirement benefit amongst the lowest in the region.
- The City of Republic doesn’t have a dedicated property tax for fire protection similar to other cities in our region.

Since arriving in Republic in July 2016, City Administration has been focused on improving processes and relationships in an effort to build trust. We have made significant changes to cut costs in order to operate in a lean, efficient and effective manner. It is my position that the City is currently operating in our community’s best financial interest without unnecessary waste or costs. However, now after having adequate time to review and make organizational adjustments, we believe it necessary to approach our citizens for an additional funding mechanism for public safety to meet the needs of our growing Republic community.

Recommended Action

Staff recommends approval. The sales tax amount of 3/4¢ and the 25-year sunset have been inserted in the Ordinance as a starting point for the discussion and can be amended by members of City Council at their choosing.