

**COUNCIL MINUTES
CITY OF PASO ROBLES**

**EMERGENCY SERVICES FUNDING OPTIONS:
COMMUNITY MEETING**

ADJOURNED REGULAR MEETING

Monday, March 05, 2001 7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The City Council of the City of El Paso de Robles, meeting in regular session at 7:00 p.m. on the above date in the Paso Robles City Hall, was called to order by Mayor Frank Mecham.

ROLL CALL Councilmembers George Finigan, Jim Heggarty, Gary Nemeth, Duane Picanco and Mayor Frank Mecham. Absent: Councilmember Gary Nemeth

1. Future Funding Options for Emergency Services/Public Safety

- (a) Emergency Services Chief Doug Hamp presented information on the need for a recurring revenue source for Emergency Services/Public Safety. Chief Hamp discussed past and current service levels and numbers of incidents, as well as how increasing state and federal mandates for firefighters limits those who may serve as volunteers.

In the 1980s and 1990s the community focused on increasing staffing for law enforcement. Now the City is asking citizens to focus on current and future Emergency Services needs. The ultimate goal is the eventual staffing of 24 firefighters.

Hamp discussed the 1997 Insurance Service Office inspection and the 2000 Emergency Services Growth Management Plan, which noted deficiencies in equipment, staffing levels, response times and training opportunities. He then explained the importance of 4-minute response times for medical aids (cardiac incidents) and flashover during fires.

As a result of these studies and input from community members at the Growth Management Plan workshops, the Paso Robles City Council is asking for public input to address the need for approximately \$2.2 million in annual funding for Emergency Services/Public Safety. Although the City Council is reviewing various options for improving service levels, it is asking the community to focus on how the City is going to provide the needed funding.

- (b) The City Council members and Chief Hamp presented an overview of two forms of new tax income, which could serve as a means to fund the expansion of Emergency Services:
- Seek authorization from the California State Legislature to ask the voters to approve a $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cent increase to local (City) sales tax rate (in place of the $\frac{1}{4}$ cent reduction just implemented by the State). The City Council submitted a letter to State legislators asking for permission to request the tax, but had not received support for this emergency legislation. It is important for constituents to contact legislators in Sacramento if they want to seek this option.
 - Establish a property-type tax to assess property owners based upon the degree of emergency service risk inherent to their property and/or the uses thereon. However, the City does not want to pay for a firm to conduct the parcel assessment study if community members do not want to explore this option as a funding source.
 - City is not pursuing the option of a utility tax at this time.
 - There is also the option of blending funding sources. In either case, the new tax proposals would require a two-thirds majority vote to implement. The earliest a new tax could be put before the voters would be November 2001, but it would need to be submitted by August.
- (c) The City Council recognizes that the public will determine what funds are available and whether Emergency Services staffing increases are incremental or immediate. However, the focus of the discussion is to find ways to meet the demands of the existing and future population. Over the next few months, the City plans to provide costs estimates for the options above based on the public's requests.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Mayor Mecham opened the public discussion. Speaking from the public were:

- Myra Phillips suggested re-examination of CDF option.
- Pat Mackie suggested that the City postpone meetings until exact costs are available.
- Kathy Barnett said she would like to see a sales tax initiative on the ballot, perhaps with time limit options for any re-vote. She asked about contracting for other city services (public works, police etc.)?
- Scott Ellis stated the need to commit to pay for services, not just developers or new residents.
- Jo Cowley thought State Representative Abel Maldonado should be invited to the public meetings.
- Gary Fowler, representing the SLO County Commission on Aging, expressed concern about user utility taxes.
- Robert Treece suggested exploring a bed tax option.

Jeff Zimmerman spoke regarding quality of life within city services versus county. He said that local control is important and contracting for services must be critically examined. He asked what the City would do if a contracting company's management changed, questioning how the City would get the fire department back if was given it away

Other questions and comments included:

- Send survey to users along with their water bills with several options and some "ballpark" figures.
- Check with other agencies that are serviced by CDF.
- A 4-minute response time may not be realistic.
- City of Valencia has a special tax for new development (construction impact fees).
- Contract services for medical aid calls.
- Does the City of Paso Robles recruit firefighters from within volunteer firefighter ranks?
- Future development is going to impact city services just like past development; fees need to be increased to offset cost of future needs.
- Property taxes are the only "reliable" source of recurring funds; the community needs to see parcel tax figures before reaching a decision.
- Explore a bond option for police/fire to provide for the immediate needs.
- Did the police chief have to go through same process (public meetings) for improved police staffing? What was public response?
- Consider satellite horse racing to generate income.
- What does \$2.2 million include?
- Compare services to other "like" cities.
- Does Emergency Services get any cost recovery?
- Adjust development impact fees.
- Re-adjust budget and prioritize.

There were no further comments either written or oral and the public discussion was closed.

The Council, by general consensus, adjourned from regular session at 8:55 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT to THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2001, 7:30 PM AT THE LIBRARY/CITY HALL CONFERENCE CENTER, 1000 SPRING STREET; AND TO EMERGENCY SERVICES FUNDING OPTIONS COMMUNITY MEETING AT 7:00 PM ON MONDAY, MARCH 12, 2001, IN THE PASO ROBLES SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD ROOM, 800 NIBLICK ROAD.

Submitted:

Sharilyn M. Ryan, Deputy City Clerk
Approved: May 1, 2001