City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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Contact:
Phil Pitchford
Public Information Officer
951-826-5975
ppitchford@riversideca.gov

Riverside City Council Votes to Place Sales Tax Measure on Ballot

Voters will decide whether to extend and increase Measure Z sales tax

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The Riverside City Council voted 7-0 Tuesday (3/3) to place on the June 2 ballot a measure that, if approved by voters, would raise the existing 1-cent Measure Z sales tax to 1.25 cents and extend the measure until ended by the voters. It currently is scheduled to expire in 2036.

The City of Riverside Services Renewal Measure would raise an additional $21 million per year. It would be a general tax, meaning it will need the approval of "50 percent plus one" of voters to pass.

City officials said that, while the City budget is in good shape, Riverside faces increased costs due to rising personnel and pension costs, inflation, unfunded state mandates, and cost increases in areas like cybersecurity threats targeting aging city systems, public safety communications, animal control, liability insurance, and technology.

"Our community has an opportunity to provide a higher level of service, and this measure puts that decision in the hands of voters," Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson said.

The City also is trying to ensure the Riverside Fire Department has the tools and personnel to fight fires and save the lives of people experiencing medical emergencies.

Fire Chief Steve McKinster told the Council in January that the long-term AP Triton Master Plan Study had identified significant operational, staffing, and infrastructure needs affecting the Fire Department's ability to meet current and future community needs. The study recommended hiring 84 additional firefighters, building two new fire stations and rebuilding or renovating 13 more.

Demand for Fire services has grown significantly from 44,670 calls in 2024 to more than 47,000 calls in 2025, and an expected 50,000 calls in 2026. Call volume is projected to reach approximately 71,000 incidents annually by 2035 and 83,000 by 2040.

Riverside has not added a new fire station or frontline apparatus since 2007, while emergency incidents have increased by more than 72% during the same period. Recently updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone mapping from the state added more than 13,000 Riverside parcels into higher-risk fire areas.

“No one enjoys paying taxes, but when those dollars stay local and go directly back into improving our own community, that’s something I can support,” Mayor Pro Tem Steven Robillard said.

Had the Council not voted to place the measure on the ballot this year, it would not have another opportunity until 2028.

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