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Porterville City Council agrees to general tax measure

Measure would support public safety, road improvements, sports facility, new library



John Lollis

By MYLES BARKER
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The Porterville City Council agreed Tuesday to put a general tax measure on the November 2018 ballot.

The council also directed staff to issue a request for qualifications (RFQ) for public policy-oriented re-

search firms to conduct citizen polling.

The general tax measure would support several potential subjects, including enhanced public safety, a multi-use indoor sports facility, local road improvements and a new main library facility, said City Manager John Lollis.

The council vote was 4-0, with Councilman Bryan Ward absent for the vote.

The council has not decided on a amount for the measure. Porterville's current sales tax rate is the second highest in Tulare County at 8.25 percent, the same as Tulare, but slightly less than Visalia at 8.5 per-

cent. The average sales tax rate in California is 7.75 percent. The highest sales tax rate in the state is 10.25 percent for several cities in Los Angeles County.

Unlike a special tax measure where taxes are imposed for a specific purpose, Lollis said with a general sales tax measure the council is restrained and restricted from identifying specific purposes.

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Phase II of water project complete

755 homes connected to city system

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A partnership of state and local agencies working to help homeowners affected by California's multi-year drought finished connecting 755 homes to a safe, reliable, permanent water supply.

All households participating in the East Porterville Water Supply Project have now been

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TAX

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City Attorney Julia Lew said there can't be a legal requirement that funds generated from the general tax measure be used on any specific purpose as that would make it a special tax. She added that the council also cannot advocate for or against the general tax measure.

"I can provide you guys [city council] with additional information as we get closer so everybody understands where those lines are because it will be really important that they are not crossed," Lew said.

Lollis said the general tax measure, although requires lower voter approval at 50 percent plus one vote as compared to 66.67 percent for a special tax measure, is not a favorable approach because there is not a clear expenditure plan.

"I would say that is some of the downside at looking at a general [tax measure]," Lollis said, adding that passage rates for general tax measures have not been highly successful in Tulare County as a whole.

Nevertheless, Councilmember Cameron Hamilton said he is excited about the general tax measure and

likes the fact that the people get to make the decision on whether it passes or not.

"All we are going to do is put it [ballot measure] out there," Hamilton said.

Now that the council agreed to a general tax measure, the next step, according to the council's recommended timetable, is to formalize consultant agreements, identify costs, draft poll and field interviews, all of which is scheduled to be completed this month. In March, the goal is for the council to conduct and analyze polling, assess measure feasibility and finalize a timetable and outreach plan.

In April, council will commence Citizens' Task Force activities and implement first non-partisan mailer. The council plans on continuing Citizen's Task Force activities for the month of May.

In June, the game plan is to continue Citizens' Task Force activities and implement second non-partisan mailer. The council will use July to finalize a ballot question and impartial analysis, expenditure plan and voter handout materials. Following the election calendar for ballot filings is the last task for council with regard to the placement of a tax ballot measure on the November election.

WATER

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price tag of \$650,000, this temporary solution was unsustainable for both the state and community members.

"The residents of East Porterville were especially hard hit by the effects of this recent drought," said Mark Ghilarducci, director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services. "Hundreds of homes were at the mercy of Mother Nature as their wells ran dry. Urgent action was needed on the part of many agencies to find short and long-term solutions. It's satisfying to see a long-term solution now in place for many homes, helping to mitigate the impacts of future droughts."

Three state agencies — the Department of Water Resources (DWR), the State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Ser-

vices — partner Tulare County and community organizations such as S Enterprises and nity Water Center to deliver a permanent solution to East Porterville water crisis. Construction on the \$48 East Porterville Supply Project will begin in early 2016. Installation of new distribution lines will connect homes in East Porterville to the new City of Porterville municipal system.

"The goal was a permanent safe water to the residents who were without water, or without water, as soon as possible," said Eileen executive director of State Water Resources Control Board. "The significant impact of the drought on safe drinking water for hundreds of families could not have been addressed without the extraordinary collaboration between state and local government and the local com-

PMA

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Governor Brown has long been an advocate of the military education model. When he was Mayor of Oakland in 2001 he founded the Oakland Military Institute, the first public military school in the state and the inspiration for PMA.

Mathis' office has worked with PUSD, Cal National Guard and the Governor's office on the PMA project for the

past two years. Porterville native veteran, the PMA holds special meaning for him as well.

"My own experience as the only Purple Heart veteran has positively impacted my life. It motivated me to start this project to fruition," said Mathis. "It means the world to help get this project up and running. In addition, any new opportunity in South Valley is a my book."

PUSD has already

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