

12/06/21

RESOLUTION NO. M-_____

A RESOLUTION providing for the submission to the qualified electors of the City of Vancouver at the February 8, 2022, Special Election of a proposition authorizing the City to increase its regular property tax levy above the limit established in RCW 84.55 to fund fire and emergency services and facilities; requesting that the Clark County Auditor place the proposition on the February 8, 2022 ballot; and providing for other matters properly related thereto.

WHEREAS, community growth and the associated 32% increase in call volume for fire and emergency medical services (EMS) since 2016 has resulted in a decline in fire and EMS response times; and

WHEREAS, since 2016, the Vancouver Fire Department has not met the adopted response time standard for priority 1 and 2 EMS calls and full alarm structure fires; and

WHEREAS, the increased call volume and associated decline in response times has also combined to limit surge capacity and reliability of these emergency response resources; and

WHEREAS, there is an insufficient effective firefighting force to meet demand and insufficient truck apparatus coverage; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the operational gaps, five of the City's current 10 fire stations are functionally obsolete or structurally unable to withstand a moderate seismic event; and

WHEREAS, during 2021, Vancouver Fire Department staff identified the necessary additional operating resources to be added to increase the response rate of the department and worked with other City departments to estimate the cost of these additional resources; and

WHEREAS, the new Fire Station 11 that is currently under construction will need permanent staff beginning in 2025, including 4 Fire Captains and 9 Fire Fighters; and

WHEREAS, operating demands citywide necessitate an additional 5.0 Fire Captain FTEs, 11.0 Fire Medic FTEs, 24.0 Firefighter FTEs and 3.0 FTE administrative positions, as well as two new vehicles: one squad apparatus and one new ladder truck; and

WHEREAS, two City Fire Stations, 3 and 6, are beyond their useful life and need to be rebuilt, and three additional Fire Stations, 4, 5, and 8, require seismic improvements; and

WHEREAS, during the workshop on October 4, 2021, Vancouver City Council reviewed the operating improvements necessary to increase call response time and asked staff to bring back additional information on available financial tools for the City to fund the additional operating resources and capital improvements; and

WHEREAS, Washington State law limits the annual increase of a city's regular property tax levy to 1% plus an allowance for new construction, unless the voters of a city approve a levy lid lift permitting the collection of regular property taxes in a greater amount; and

WHEREAS, to sustainably fund these potential fire and emergency services investments, the City must either identify new revenues or significantly reprioritize existing general fund programs such as parks maintenance, police or street maintenance, which rank as high priorities with City residents; and

WHEREAS, on November 15, 2021, City Council reviewed different property tax tools for raising additional revenues and requested staff bring back several possible scenarios for the funding of fire and emergency services, operating, equipment and capital improvements based on a pay-as-you-go manner utilizing a single year permanent levy lid lift; and

WHEREAS, the City and Fire District 5 have an interlocal agreement for the City to provide fire services to Fire District 5 residents, and Fire District 5 has communicated its support for the City moving forward with additional resources for Fire operations, and the City anticipates that Fire District 5 will contribute proportionately; and

WHEREAS, the City's preliminary regular property tax levy for taxes to be collected in 2022 is \$2.0585 per \$1,000 of assessed value, which includes a \$0.2061 per \$1,000 of assessed value affordable housing levy. The total current levy is approximately \$1.2665 per \$1,000 of assessed value less than what is statutorily authorized; and

WHEREAS, RCW 84.55.050 provides for the levy of regular property taxes in an amount exceeding the limitation specified in RCW Chapter 84.55 if such increased levy is authorized by a ballot proposition approved by a majority of the voters at an election held with the taxing district (a "levy lid lift"); and

WHEREAS, the City Council deems it necessary to submit to the voters of the City a permanent levy lid lift proposition of whether or not the City shall levy regular property taxes for collection in 2023 in excess of the limit factor provided for in RCW 84.55.050(1); and

WHEREAS, on November 22, 2021, the City Council deliberated on the desired size of the levy increase and selected \$0.50/\$1,000 of assessed value as the levy rate increase to put before the voters during the special election to be held on February 8, 2022;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VANCOUVER:

Section 1. **Findings.** The Council hereby adopts and incorporates by reference the above recitals as findings. The Council further finds that the best interests of the residents of the City require the City to fund fire and emergency services, equipment, and facilities, including but

not limited to the following (“Fire and Emergency Services”):

- Add 9.0 FTE Fire Captains, 11.0 Fire Medics, 33.0 FTE Fire Fighters and 3.0 FTE support staff;
- Acquire one new squad apparatus and one new truck engine;
- Replace Fire Stations 3 and 6;
- Seismically improve, expand, and/or renovate existing Fire Stations 4, 5, and 8;
- Fund other necessary administrative costs in other departments to support investments outlined above;
- Fund additional operating, maintenance, vehicle and capital expenses to provide enhanced fire and emergency services as determined by the City Council.

The City Council shall determine the timing, order and manner of funding Fire and Emergency Services and the use of levy lid lift proceeds, including those described above. The Fire and Emergency Services funded by this proposition assume proportionate contribution from Fire District 5. The cost of all compensation, benefits, training, support services, equipment, vehicles, infrastructure, facilities, real property, and administrative expenses and other costs incurred in connection with the Fire and Emergency Services shall be deemed a part of the costs of such Fire and Emergency Services. The City Council may alter, make substitutions to and amend such components as it determines are in the best interests of the City and consistent with the fire and emergency service purposes described herein.

Section 2. **Calling of Election Regarding the Levy of Additional Property Taxes.** There shall be submitted to the qualified electors of the City of the levy lid lift proposition whether the City shall levy regular property taxes above the levy limitations established in RCW 84.55.050 and RCW 84.55.010 for their ratification or rejection at a special election to be held on February 8, 2022. The Clark County Auditor, as ex officio supervisor of elections in Clark County, is hereby requested to call and conduct the election referenced on such day and to submit to the qualified electors of the City for their approval or rejection a proposition to increase the City’s regular

property tax levy by \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation to a total rate not to exceed \$2.56 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for collection in 2023, as allowed by RCW 84.55. The 2023 levy amount, less any expiring levies, will be used as the basis to calculate subsequent levy limits.

Upon approval of the voters of the proposition set forth herein, the City may use proceeds of such levy to pay the costs of Fire and Emergency Services as set forth in Section 1 of this resolution.

Section 3. **Ballot Proposition.** The City Clerk is hereby authorized and directed, not later than December 10, 2021, to certify a proposition to the Clark County Auditor, as ex officio supervisor of elections in Clark County, Washington, in substantially the following form:

PROPOSITION NO. 1

CITY OF VANCOUVER

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AND FACILITIES LEVY LID LIFT

The City Council of the City of Vancouver adopted Resolution No. _____ concerning a levy lid lift to fund fire and emergency services. This proposition would fund only fire and emergency services, including additional firefighters, equipment, and construction and seismic retrofitting of facilities to improve response times. This proposition would increase the City's regular property tax by \$0.50/\$1,000 assessed valuation; not exceeding a total rate of \$2.56/\$1,000 for collection in 2023. The 2023 levy amount, less expiring levies, will be the permanent basis to calculate subsequent levies, per RCW 84.55. Qualifying seniors, veterans, and others would be exempt, per RCW 84.36.

Should this proposition be approved?

YES

NO

For purposes of receiving notice of the language of the ballot proposition required by RCW 29A.36.080, the City Council hereby designates: (a) the City Clerk (Natasha Ramras), telephone:

(360) 487-8484; email: natasha.ramras@cityofvancouver.us; and (b) the City Attorney (Jonathan Young); telephone: (360) 487-8500; email: jonathan.young@cityofvancouver.us, as the individuals to whom such notice from the Auditor should be provided. The City Attorney and the City Clerk are each authorized individually to approve changes to the wording of such proposition as may be recommended by the Clark County Auditor and the Clark County Prosecuting Attorney, as long as the intent of the proposition remains clear and consistent with the intent of this resolution.

Section 4. **Exemption.** If the ballot proposition set forth herein is approved by the voters, as authorized by RCW 84.36.381, senior citizens, disabled veterans, and other qualifying individuals (as defined in RCW 84.36.381) shall be exempt from the tax increase resulting from such levy lid lift.

Section 5. **Voters Pamphlet.** To the extent that a local voters' pamphlet and/or online voters' guide ("Voters' Pamphlet") will be produced for the February 8, 2022 election, the Pamphlet shall include an explanatory statement and arguments advocating approval and disapproval of the ballot measure, if any. Pursuant to RCW 29A.32.280, the arguments advocating approval and disapproval of the ballot measure shall be prepared by committees appointed by the City Council or the Clark County Auditor.

Section 6. **Severability.** If any provisions of this resolution shall be declared by any court of competent jurisdiction to be contrary to law, then such provision shall be null and void and shall be deemed severable from the remaining provisions of this resolution and shall in no way affect

the validity of the other provisions of this resolution or of the levy or collection of the taxes authorized by this proposition.

Section 7. **Effective Date.** This resolution shall take effect and be in full force immediately upon adoption by the City Council.

ADOPTED at a Regular Meeting of the Vancouver City Council this _____, of _____, 2021.

Anne McEnery-Ogle, Mayor

Attest:

Natasha Ramras, City Clerk

Approved as to form:

Jonathan Young, City Attorney