



CITY OF SNOQUALMIE

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City of Snoqualmie

News Release

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Voters to Decide Whether to Maintain Public Safety Service Levels *Measure Would Also Preserve Parks and Street Maintenance*

Snoqualmie, WA – The City of Snoqualmie City Council voted unanimously on July 23, 2012 to place an operations levy on the November election ballot for an operations levy to help maintain the current levels of police, fire, and emergency medical services. The measure would also help preserve basic maintenance of streets, parks, and trails within the city to avoid more costly improvements in the future.

“Residents have told us they are happy with the levels of service in Snoqualmie for police, fire, parks, and streets,” said Council Member Maria Henriksen. “To maintain those levels, we need this levy in place. This is an opportunity to give voters a chance to confirm that this is the level of service they want us to maintain.”

Since 2001, costs for basic city services have increased by more than 4%, yet during the same time period the city has only increased property taxes by a maximum of 1% annually as required by state law. The city will only be able to increase property taxes by 1% in 2013 unless voters decide they want to maintain the current level and quality of services and approve the levy measure.

“We need this measure to maintain the quality of public safety, parks and streets in Snoqualmie, preserving what makes this community special,” said Mayor Matt Larson.

Funds from the operations levy would allow the city to maintain adequate police and fire forces to keep current fast response times. Last year, fire and police responded to more than 7,000 calls in an average time of 4-6 minutes. An additional full-time fire fighter would be added to the force; the Fire Department has not added any new fire fighters in the last decade.

The levy increase would allow the Police and Fire Departments to maintain safety and emergency response training to meet current safety standards. This levy increase would ensure ongoing maintenance and safe operations of emergency vehicles including patrol vehicles, fire engines, and emergency medical units, as well as police and fire stations and emergency dispatch centers. Increased population and incidents have added to the day-to-day operations and maintenance costs.

If voters pass the levy proposition, it would help Snoqualmie begin to address deteriorating neighborhood and city streets so that more costly repairs will not be required in the future. The measure would help the city coordinate road repairs with water and sewer improvements to minimize disruption and save in costs.

Parks and recreation facilities, including parks, playfields, and playgrounds, will be able to continue to meet safety standards and community expectations including basic services such as maintenance of picnic areas, clean restrooms, trash removal, lawn mowing, and weed control. The measure will provide funds to preserve trails and natural areas in Snoqualmie.

The city has done much belt-tightening over the past several years to maintain service levels even while operations became more costly. They include cutting replacement equipment for the fire, public works, and parks departments; elimination of cost-of-living increases for management; a hiring freeze on new positions; and savings in health and insurance costs among other spending reductions.

The cost of the measure would be \$0.24 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For the owner of the average \$413,000 Snoqualmie home, the cost would be \$8 per month. For a \$200,000 Snoqualmie home, the cost would be about \$4 per month to maintain public safety, streets, and parks and recreation.

In March, on behalf of the City, EMC Research and Northwest Public Affairs conducted a telephone survey of Snoqualmie residents to explore whether to pursue the levy option. The research shows that Snoqualmie citizens are satisfied with the current level of city services and want that level to be maintained. (See the survey "Key Findings" posted on the city website at www.cityofsnoqualmie.org in the "Public Input" box.)

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