

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

Folsom's city finances are ailing.
Is a sales tax hike called Measure G the cure?

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Folsom residents have clear choices to make as their city faces a clouded fiscal future. They can do nothing and watch services like police and parks deteriorate amid a worsening budget deficit. Or they can stabilize finances by approving Measure G, a one-cent sales tax on the November ballot. It's time for Folsom to invest in its future.

Measure G is the creation of committed residents who took matters into their own hands and placed the proposal on the ballot when the Folsom City Council failed to propose any solution to the city's financial problems. Citizens crafted a measure with the voters' priorities in mind.

Measure G is what's known as a special sales tax, which means the funds can only be expended on the listed purposes. Traditionally requiring a two-thirds vote to pass, Measure G will only

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require majority support thanks to a recent court ruling that treats citizen-advanced initiatives differently than in the past.

Opinion: Future city councils would be required to spend 20% of Measure G sales tax revenues on police, 20% on fire, 15% on parks and trails, 15% on traffic and street maintenance, 15% on economic development and 15% on major capital improvements. Measure G would raise an estimated \$29 million to supplement an existing budget of about \$108 million.

Folsom and Citrus Heights are the only two cities in Sacramento County that don't have a dedicated sales tax to meet local needs. With existing sales tax revenues not growing as they did in the past and with rising personnel costs and unfunded pension liabilities (an estimated 72% of the budget is salaries), Folsom is heading toward an upside-down budget absent an infusion of revenues.

Measure G proposes a citizen oversight process to ensure the funds are spent properly, which is as solid a safeguard as any measure can propose. This measure gives the next city council and the next city manager (the current leader, Elaine Andersen, is retiring) all the tools they will need to succeed.

There will undoubtedly be far more citizen demands for spending than there will be money. There is not limitless money available to add more police and raise staff salaries. Future city councils can create financial problems for themselves with unwise decisions. So while Measure G is important on this ballot, electing fiscally sound council members who possess the courage to make tough decisions is desperately needed.

We urge Folsom residents to vote Yes on Measure G.