

Measure WC Is Not The Typical City Sales Tax Increase

By Jerri Potras, West Covina Neighbors Stopping the Tax Grab Committee

West Covina residents will vote March 3, 2020 on whether or not the city sales tax should be increased by .75 percent. On the surface, West Covina's sales tax increase, Measure WC, seems similar to the sales tax increase residents voted on in Glendora and Covina and residents in Azusa will be voting on. West Covina's Measure WC is radically different from those measures and it is those differences that is the cause for concern. The impact of Measure WC on West Covina is so wrong that former mayors Fred Sykes, Forest Tennant, James Toma, and Ben Wong along with retired Auditor Gloria Gandara, West Covina Audit Committee member Jim Grivich, former Commissioner Steve Bennett, and myself, a retired community college administrator, signed the ballot statement urging a "No" vote on West Covina's Measure WC.

West Covina's sales tax increase was written by the city's public safety unions, not the West Covina City Council. When West Covina's unions wrote their sales tax initiative, they did so to benefit themselves, not residents. The recent pay raise the West Covina City Council recently approved for fire and po-

lice is subtly but clearly linked to Measure WC in four ways.

First, the newly-approved public safety contracts state that if the city gets new revenue exceeding \$3 million and \$4 million, fire and police personnel, respectively, receive another 4% plus a 9% bonus in addition to the 12% pay increase that went into effect January 2020. These two raises plus the bonus give fire and police a huge 25% raise despite the State Auditor ranking West Covina "High-Risk for Fiscal Distress" as the 17th worst of 471 cities in California.

Second, if passed, Measure WC triggers a clause in the new fire and police contracts that will require West Covina's police and fire salaries to be third among ten pre-designated cities police departments regardless of the city budget. Economies fluctuate. Stock markets drop. Requiring West Covina's public safety salaries to be in the top quarter of designated cities regardless of economic realities is not sound fiscal policy and will quickly require residents to pay additional tax and fee increases.

Third, West Covina finance staff acknowledged the increased cost for overtime and pension payments associated with pay raises were not included in the pay raise cost projections. When those costs are factored in, ap-

proximately 7 million of the 9.7 million West Covina is committed to police and fire personnel pay and pensions. With the majority of the new tax going to expensive pay and benefits, little is left for the proponents "promised" wish list.

Lastly, Measure WC union's measure replaces West Covina's Audit and Finance Committee with an Oversight Committee that requires police and fire personnel to be on the committee and their approval on changes a city council may wish to make to their newly created Oversight Committee. The two committees have completely different purposes. The Audit Committee should not have been included in ordinance the union wrote. Most importantly, there is no need to replace a committee that has been working in the best interest of residents.

Measure WC is not a good deal for West Covina.

On Saturday, January 11, 2020, approximately 40 West Covina residents attended the kick-off meeting of the West Covina Neighbors Stopping the Tax Grab Committee. We are letting our neighbors know about the dire consequences of Measure WC and urging them to Vote No on WC.

For more information, visit www.westcovinaneighbors.com.

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