



Perris News

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Council Approves November Ballot Measure

The City Council gave its approval this week for a November ballot measure that would ask Perris residents to pay about \$11 a month for enhanced police, fire and public safety protection.

Many residents—those living north of Nuevo Road and in the City's south end—would actually see a significant reduction in their assessments under the proposal unanimously approved by the five-member City Council.

Those property owners already pay at least \$277 a year in a separate assessment for public safety. The Nov. 3 ballot measure sets a flat \$135.88 annual fee on all City homeowners.

Council members called the proposal a matter of fairness, saying that residents who already pay the public safety assessment bear a disproportionate burden while others pay nothing.

"This is about being fair to all residents," said Mayor Daryl Busch. "We have limited places where we can cut our budget. We don't want to cut public safety and we don't think the public wants to cut public safety."

The ballot measure would raise about \$2 million annually. Police, emergency services and law enforcement costs take up about 60 percent of Perris' general fund budget.

The November ballot measure would help offset some of the City's current budget deficit caused by the deep recession. Perris has already implemented a hiring freeze, reduced travel and training expenditures and tapped its financial reserves to ease the budget crunch. City workers also will take unpaid furloughs to further reduce costs.

Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough said without the measure, Perris residents can expect to see fewer police on the streets and a fire department that increasingly struggles to meet its responsibilities. He said the City has exercised caution and frugality in recent years, but that the current situation requires support from the public.

"This is no ploy," Yarbrough said. "We are facing what other cities have faced in the last 18 months. It is now on our doorstep."

Council members Rita Rogers and Al Landers expressed their belief that City voters will approve the measure.

"We are asking the voters to work with us," Rogers said. "I believe (approving the public safety measure) is a choice our voters are willing to make. I leave this in the hands of the voters."

Landers said the City Council remains committed to public safety, the biggest portion of the City's budget. Now the voters must show their willingness to fund police, fire and emergency services.

"We're giving you the choice," Landers said.