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Published May 18th, 2016

## Sales Tax Measure Decision on Hold Until June

*By Cathy Tyson*

City leaders weighed the pros and cons of placing a 1 percent sales tax measure on the November ballot, after hearing opinion poll results and the recommendation of the Sales Tax Revenue Study Committee at the May 9 Lafayette City Council meeting. Although it appears they support the concept, council members chose to defer making a final decision until their June 13 meeting. While the city budget is balanced, the Sales Tax Revenue Committee found after months of meetings and investigation, that "there is little additional revenue available for new projects or programs." Their official recommendation is for a general transaction and use tax of 1 percent for a duration of 29 years, with revenue raised staying in Lafayette, to preserve and enhance the community with annual audits and citizens' oversight. The measure would raise about \$3 million per year.

Professional pollster Brian Godbe of Godbe Research presented the overall findings of the voter attitude survey that assessed potential support for a tax, and identified respondents' priorities for city facilities and services at the May 9 meeting. The firm contacted a total of 426 random voting-age residents either by phone or over the Internet in March.

Apparently people really do 'Love Lafayette.' Of those who took the survey, over 80 percent are somewhat or very satisfied with the provision of city services, with a meager 16 percent somewhat or very dissatisfied.

Godbe's recommendation: "It is feasible to move forward" with a sales tax measure, but he cautioned there has to be a strong public outreach effort. The survey showed in the initial test that 67.4 percent of respondents answered definitely yes or probably yes that they would vote to provide funding that would stay in Lafayette, and maintain the city's quality of life by funding general city services, including protecting open space from development, enhancing police protection, increase downtown parking, create and maintain downtown parks, revitalize the historic Park Theater and reduce downtown congestion.

As a general tax, if the measure is approved by voters, it only needs a simple majority to pass. Revenue raised would be placed in the city's general fund and may be used for any lawful government purpose. However, City Attorney Mala Subramanian clarified, "the city may still identify specific services for which it intends to use tax proceeds." City leaders were clear their intention is to allocate money to certain areas in addition to seeking matching funds from grants where possible. Mayor Mark Mitchell was hoping to get an unambiguous picture of what the public wants in an unbiased way, and was happy that "the results of the survey are clear, by a comfortable margin." A review, and decision on the proposed ballot measure will occur at the June 13 City Council meeting.

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