

City of Gresham

Measure 26-239

BALLOT TITLE

Five-year operating levy for police, fire, homeless and crisis response.

Question: Shall Gresham increase and stabilize police, fire, homeless, crisis response with five-year levy, \$1.50/\$1,000 assessed value, beginning July 1, 2023? This measure may cause property taxes to increase more than three percent.

Summary: Without the levy, Gresham faces a \$8 million budget shortfall and citywide layoffs. Fire and police emergency response times are already longer, delays more frequent, and first responders max out if simultaneous emergencies happen. Mental health calls take twice as long to respond to and twice as many officers.

Independent reports agree Gresham needs more police and firefighters to respond faster to emergencies, reduce crime and keep neighborhoods safe. The majority of residents polled asked the City to focus on safety and homeless response and supported providing a trained mental health crisis response.

Passage of this measure would:

- Restore the Neighborhood Enforcement Team.
- Reduce response times.
- Enhance crime reduction efforts.
- Expand homeless services to evenings/weekends.
- Reduce 911 calls with a trained mental health crisis resource.

The cost of this levy on a typical Gresham home would be \$28.50 per month (with an assessed, not market, value of \$228,000).

How it will be spent:

- Police: At least 62.5%
- Fire: At least 35%
- Homeless services: No more than 2.5%

Estimated revenue:

- \$13,000,000 in 2023/24
- \$13,400,000 in 2024/25
- \$13,800,000 in 2025/26
- \$14,200,000 in 2026/27
- \$14,600,000 in 2027/28
- Five-year total: \$69,000,000

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Gresham City Council is asking voters to consider the "Gresham Safety Levy," a five-year operating levy to fund police, fire, homeless and mental health crisis response.

Why is the Gresham Safety Levy needed?

Independent studies agree the community needs more police and firefighters.

- Simultaneous calls for one apartment fire and one medical emergency max out our emergency services.
- Without more staff, police struggle to respond to 911 calls and investigate crimes.
- Homeless emergency response on evenings and

- weekends is a critical need. Vulnerable community members can't wait until the next day for help.
- Mental health crises take up twice as much time as other 911 calls and twice as many police officers.
- Gresham property taxes, one of the lowest in the state, only fund 44% of police and fire costs.

What will the levy fund?

Police services: At least 62.5% of funds

Impact: Add approximately 26 new positions; keep 13 temporary positions; protect officers from budget cuts

- Restore specialty teams like Neighborhood Enforcement Team; traffic enforcement.
- Reduce response times.
- Safer neighborhoods and community—gun violence prevention, drug investigations.
- Re-open Rockwood Public Safety Building.
- Alternative response through unarmed public safety specialists.
- Mental health trained resources like clinicians will respond to community members in crisis, in coordination with our fire team.

Fire services: At least 35% of funds

Impact: Add approximately 16 new positions; keep four temporary positions; protect firefighters from budget cuts

- Improve emergency response: Gresham has fewer firefighters and nearly 30% more calls than similar-sized cities.
- Less reliance on Portland during multiple emergencies.
- Inspections at schools to keep kids safe and community education on fire prevention.
- Reduce 911 calls by connecting frequent callers with resources.

Homeless response: No more than 2.5% of funds

Impact: Add one new position; keep one temporary position

- Expand response to some evenings/weekends.

Gresham residents will oversee spending of this levy.

Gresham residents serving on an oversight committee will oversee levy funds. These monies will be put in a dedicated and protected fund to make sure they are used properly. The committee will report to the public on how the monies are being used. For the past 40+ years, Gresham has received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

What happens if the levy fails?

Gresham faces an \$8 million budget shortfall. No new police or firefighters would be added to respond to rising crime. Instead, budget cuts would reduce public safety services to the community.

Without a major investment in fire, police and emergency response services, residents' lives are at risk:

- Inability to provide 24-hour police response.
- Life-saving minutes lost when firefighters have to call Portland for help.
- Decrease in homeless connected to shelter, jobs.
- In the first year, the Gresham Safety Levy will protect 34 existing police officer jobs and 21 existing firefighter jobs from budget cuts.

Visit GreshamOregon.gov/Safety-Levy for more information.

Submitted by:

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City of Gresham

NO ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION WERE FILED.