

City of Gresham

Measure 26-247

BALLOT TITLE

Five-year operating levy, retain and hire firefighters and police officers.

Question: Shall Gresham improve fire, police, and public safety responsiveness with a five-year levy, \$1.35/\$1,000 assessed value, beginning July 1, 2024? This measure may cause property taxes to increase more than three percent.

Summary: Gresham's population has grown 19% over the past twenty years, while daily minimum firefighter staffing only increased 9%. Gresham has one less sworn police officer than twenty years ago.

Over the same time, calls for fire service have increased 69% and shootings in Gresham have spiked 400% in recent years. The combination of rising need and fewer personnel means slower emergency response times and fewer patrol officers to prevent crimes.

This levy will retain existing positions, fund 13 new firefighters and 9 new police officers. By law, the levy can only be used for police and fire services.

The current \$15 per month Police, Fire and Parks fee only funds 9% of public safety services and is not enough to meet the growing demand for services. A dedicated levy will enhance fire and police protection and responsiveness. The levy will not replace the existing fee.

The average cost of the levy on a Gresham home would be \$25.65 per month (based on an average assessed, not market, value of \$228,000), beginning July 1, 2024. Estimated revenue:

- \$12,100,000 in 2024/25
- \$12,450,000 in 2025/26
- \$12,800,000 in 2026/27
- \$13,200,000 in 2027/28
- \$13,600,000 in 2028/29
- Five-year total: \$64,150,000

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

To meet the growing need and demand for additional fire and police services and to better serve and protect all Gresham residents, the City Council is asking voters to support a dedicated five-year levy to fund 13 new firefighters and 9 new police officers. If passed, voters will decide in five years whether or not to renew it.

Why is a levy needed and how will it be spent?

More people need more first responders. The number of firefighters and police officers has not kept pace with city population growth. Gresham's population has grown 19% over the past twenty years, while daily minimum firefighter staffing has only increased 9%. Gresham has one less sworn police officer than twenty years ago. A dedicated levy will result in more firefighters and police officers to better serve and protect all Gresham residents.

In an emergency, every second counts. Increasing calls for emergency, and often life-saving, fire and police services combined with too few first responders means slower response times.

This levy retains an average of 30 public safety positions per year and funds 13 more firefighter positions and 9 more police officer positions, leading to quicker response times and a safer community. By law, the levy can only be used for police and fire services.

More safety for seniors, children, and neighborhoods. 20% of Gresham residents are age 60 and over and 23% are age 18 or under. The city is home to 28 senior living communities, 138 adult foster care homes, and 3 school districts serving more than 30,000 children.

A dedicated levy will mean more neighborhood patrols to prevent, engage, and investigate drug related crimes and property and violent crimes that threaten community safety.

The current public safety fee is essential but not enough. The \$15 per month Police, Fire, and Parks fee paid on utility bills funds just 9% of existing public safety services. The fee is not enough to meet the growing need for additional firefighters and police officers to enhance public safety.

A dedicated levy will allow more neighborhood patrols to prevent and investigate drug related crimes, property crimes and gun violence.

An independent taxpayer committee will ensure oversight, accountability, and annual audits. Levy revenue will be placed in a dedicated and protected account overseen by a 7-member committee of Gresham residents. The committee will make annual reports to the City Council and levy spending will be audited each year. The levy will raise an estimated \$64 million over five years (\$12 to \$14 million each year).

Visit GreshamOregon.gov/Fire-Police-Levy for more information.

Submitted by:

*Rachael Gangelhoff, City Recorder
City of Gresham*

NO ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION WERE FILED.