



TITLE

Potential Revenue Measure: Polling Results

RECOMMENDATION

Review polling results for a potential revenue measure.

CONTACT

Jason Holley, City Manager

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

For the past several weeks, American Canyon has been asking residents for their opinions on a potential new revenue measure. The results of the survey will be presented tonight.

The well-renowned statewide polling firm of Fairbank, Maslin, Maulin, Metz & Associates (FM3 Research) conducted a statistically valid public opinion poll. FM3 compiled a random sample of voters from American Canyon's local voter file. A total of 267 voters completed the poll. This sample did not include minors or adults who are not registered to vote. The demographic and geographic characteristics of survey respondents were carefully monitored during the data collection phase to ensure the final sample profile reflects the voters in American Canyon. Consequently, not all adults or voters were invited to take the survey. The margin of sampling error was +/- 6.2% which equates to a 95% confidence level.

The polling effort tested voter support for a *general* sales tax measure, including both a one-percent (1.0%) and one-half percent (0.5%) options. Tax increases require voter approval, so FM3 tested the following potential ballot language:

American Canyon Public Safety, Parks, City Services Measure. Shall an ordinance funding City of American Canyon's general services, such as maintaining 911 response; preventing crime; adding well-trained police officers; keeping public areas/parks safe/clean; protecting wetlands, natural areas; keeping trash out of local creeks; maintaining parks, trails, youth/adult recreation, senior programs, among others; by establishing a 1% sales tax, providing approximately \$3,700,000 annually until ended by voters, requiring audits, spending disclosure, funds locally controlled, be adopted?

In addition to testing the potential ballot measure language itself, the pollsters dug deeper by asking respondents to rate their opinion on the importance of a variety of governmental services - including maintaining and/or expanding public safety and parks and recreation services and amenities. Lastly, the pollsters asked follow up educational questions and offered oppositional statements.

General Tax vs. Special Tax

When considering the polling results, it is important to understand the distinction between "general taxes" and "special taxes". General taxes can be used on any governmental purpose and require approval by 50% of the voters. This differs from a special tax, which can only be used for a limited purpose and requires a higher (66.7%) voter approval.

This is particularly important because FM3's prior research did not identify any other cities in CA who successfully passed a special sales tax just for parks & recreation needs. As the data shows, while these governmental services are popular with some voters, achieving a 2/3rds approval is unheard-of, so based on their recommendation, a general sales tax that *could* be used parks and recreation (and other governmental services) was conducted.

The polling results highlight a "cold floor" of opinion (i.e. without any education or campaign). The ballot language focuses on maintaining existing services levels. Fifty (50%) of the respondents initially indicated support by selecting "Definitely Yes" or "Probably Yes", while 37% indicated opposition by selecting "Probably No" or "Definitely No". The remainder leaned one way or another or were undecided.

Like most voters, support increased when respondents were presented with educational information and decreased when subjected to oppositional messages. Support for specific services also varied - with public safety ranking highest and parks and recreation ranking lower. Support for maintaining services was higher than expanding services or amenities, and support for the one-half percent tax was higher than the one-percent tax.

Next Steps

This item is intended to provide the Council with information and to receive direction regarding potential next steps. The deadline for Council to place a revenue measure on the November 2026 Ballot is June 16.

Should the Council decide to proceed, then staff would return to Council on June 2 with draft ballot language. If the Council desires broader ballot language to include *expansion* of services levels and amenities, then Council should provide that input tonight. In addition, if Council desires to proceed with achieving the higher voter threshold for a special tax, then Council should also provide that input tonight.

Lastly, the public communication firm of Tripeppi Smith & Associates has been retained to support public outreach and education services. Their efforts will assist in providing neutral, informational outreach to the community in advance of potential voter consideration in November 2026 Election (Attachment 1).

COUNCIL PRIORITY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Organizational Effectiveness: "Deliver exemplary government services."

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost for FM3 and Tripeppi-Smith are included in the FY 25-26 Budget. The cost for the November 2026 election will be include in next year's budget.

Staff estimates a one-percent (1%) sales tax would generate approximately \$3.7M per year in new revenue. Over a 30 year time period this revenue could service approximately \$62M in new debt (given current municipal bond rates of 4.25%). A one-half percent (0.5%) sales tax could generate half of this amount - or approximately \$31M.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

15378(b) - The action is not a "Project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") because it does not qualify as a "Project" under Public Resources Code Sections 21065 and 21080 and in Section 15378(b) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.

COMMUNICATION

Level 4: Robust Communication & Engagement

Staff has conducted outreach to City commissions and local media to provide awareness of this item. The agenda, staff report, and associated materials also serve as a form of communication to inform the public of the City's evaluation of a potential sales tax measure.

Should the City Council provide direction to proceed with a sales tax measure for this general election, additional outreach and education efforts will be conducted in accordance with the attached communications plan. The plan provides a high-level approach and maybe refined to accommodate additional ideas, consistent with the approved budget.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. [Draft Outreach and Education Communications Plan](#)