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For Immediate Release

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City of Ventura survey shows voters support possible tax

A survey conducted by the City of Ventura in May shows that voters overwhelmingly support the continuation of specific services provided by the City and are likely to support a sales tax measure to ensure that those services can be maintained or improved at current levels.

The research firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) developed the survey in consultation with the City, and interviews were made by telephone with a random sample of 602 city of Ventura registered voters who are likely to vote in the 2016 General Election. Survey results are available online at www.cityofventura.net/involved/engagement.

Large percentages of voters are in favor of including the following features or provisions in the funding measure: protection of local water supplies; keeping all fire stations open; protecting local beaches, rivers and coastal waters from pollution; maintaining and improving fire, police, and paramedic emergency response, maintaining essential city services; and improving services for seniors, the disabled and veterans.

A majority of voters perceive there is a need for increased funding for essential city services. When asked whether there is "a great or some need, a little or no real need for additional funds for City services," a majority of voters (60 percent) said there is a need for increased funding for essential city services. Additionally, seventy-six percent of voters support a requirement that all expenditures from the measure be subject to annual independent financial audits.

Ventura is facing financial challenges, as a result of the poor past economy. Over the past few years the City has closed budget shortfalls through expenditure reductions and service reductions. Given the changes to local government revenue streams, additional revenue strategies are being considered to maintain services.

Survey results show that a majority of voters (55 percent) would vote in favor of a ballot measure raising the sales tax by one percent to increase funding for essential city services while 39 percent would oppose it.

When voters were presented with the option of a one-half percent sales tax increase, 61 percent indicated they would vote in favor of the ballot measure, while 32 percent would oppose it. A further 8 percent were undecided. A General Purpose Sales Tax Measure requires a simple majority (50% +1) in favor to pass.

Two-thirds of voters (67 percent) have a positive perception of the direction in which the City is headed, while 76 percent have a positive perception of their local neighborhood.

"The survey is an important tool in listening to our community," said Mayor Cheryl Heitmann. "Our citizens have a positive perception of the direction the City is headed, and at the same time there are areas where residents want us to do more."

As a 150-year-old full service city, the City provides residents with a variety of public services, including police, fire, water, wastewater, parks, youth and senior recreation, stormwater, street maintenance, traffic management, building regulation and planning. Additionally, as a coastal community there are responsibilities that other communities do not have, including the pier, sand clearing and pick up, coastal erosion protection and dredging.

This release is available on the City of Ventura website www.cityofventura.net. --###--