



Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

ACTION CALENDAR
June 28, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
Submitted by: Jose Luis Bedolla, Chairperson, Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
Subject: Request for Timely Fiscal Information on Measures FF and GG

RECOMMENDATION

The Disaster and Fire Safety Commission (“Commission” or “DFSC”) respectfully recommends that Council direct the Fire Department and City Manager provide the Commission with the following fiscal information regarding Measures GG and FF:

1. Base budget documentation for the 22/23 FY (current year) that was approved by Council;
2. Quarterly, preferably monthly, expenditure reports, including a brief narrative describing each line item, with initial reports starting by March 30, 2022, with a published calendar for reporting and
3. The proposed budgets submitted to Council’s Budget and Finance Policy Committee in April, each subsequent revision presented to Council, and the budget that is adopted at the end of the budget process.

The Commission takes seriously the role it has been given by the voters and the City Council to provide oversight and advice to the City Council about the use of Measure GG and FF funds. DFSC commissioners intend to carry out this role but must rely on information from the City Manager and the Fire Department to do so.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The Commission is supposed to receive formal written reports on a regular cadence to provide input and oversight. Proper oversight may lead to more efficient and/or effective use of taxpayer dollars. The cost of producing financial information for the Commission should be minimal, as most financial systems allow for project reporting. If not, the cost incurred would only be the set-up time, which is minimal.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Regarding Measure GG, the most recent budget information provided to the Commission was a December 2020 Year-End budget report dated December 2, 2020.

Regarding Measure FF, in January 2021, the Fire Department presented the Commission with a preliminary budget overview and presented an informal working group of the Commission a detailed, but still preliminary, version of the budget in February 2021. To date, the Commission has not been provided with the final FY 22 Measure GG or FF budget, as approved by Council in June 2021, despite requests by Chair Bedolla at nearly every DFSC meeting. In addition, at its September 22, 2021, meeting, the Commission informally requested that the Fire Department provide a Measure FF implementation plan; in response, the Department promised more information, however only ad hoc updates have since been provided.

The Commission appreciates the strain that the Covid pandemic has placed on staff, as well as the challenge of managing the new influx of funds from Measure FF, and has therefore been patient despite a lack of information that has prevented the Commission from fulfilling its duties for more than the past year. At this point, however, as we head into another budget cycle, we believe that it is reasonable to expect that the information begin to flow.

The City's Budget Manager has proposed to begin having department budget presentations to the Council's Budget and Finance Policy Committee in April. The Council will hold a public hearing on the FY 23 and FY 24 proposed budgets on May 10. To perform its oversight responsibilities, the Commission will need to receive this information in the same timeframes.

BACKGROUND

The Commission's main duty is to serve as an oversight body for the expenditure of Measure GG and FF funds. On September 22, 2020, the City Council passed a resolution "Designating the DFSC as the Citizens' Oversight Committee for Expenditure of the Proceeds of the Fire, Emergency Services and Wildfire Prevention Tax (Measure FF)" which replicated the Commission's duties with respect to Measure GG. The resolution states that "Citizen input and oversight are crucial for transparency and accountability." It further states:

For this purpose, in addition to its other powers, the Commission may: 1) request detailed expenditure plans for tax proceeds annually, which shall be provided to it as early in the budget process as feasible; 2) make recommendations to the City Manager and the City Council as to the rate at which the tax should be set and how any tax proceeds should be spent; and 3) obtain a report on actual expenditures.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There is no direct environmental impact of this recommendation.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The rationale is to ensure that the Commission and the City not only stay within the letter of the law but the spirit. This Citizen Commission is supposed to provide oversight. Without budget data and input into the budget, the City may not be in compliance with the two measures. Even with the currently proposed review cycles, middle of the year and end of the year, there is no ability to provide further input, modifications, nor address ad hoc requests from the community.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Since most financial systems require set up of annual budgets and they can output results with minimal staff time, no other actions were considered.

CITY MANAGER

See Companion Report

CONTACT PERSON

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