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City Council

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Agency: San Diego City Council

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Summary

The City Council meeting on July 22, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. began with a discussion on agenda item 200, which proposed a one-cent sales tax increase for the City of San Diego. Over 30 speakers entered the City Council Chambers to voice their opinion on whether to include the measure in the November 2024 election, with the majority in favor. Following the Council's unanimous approval of agenda item 200, they briefly discussed and approved agenda item 201, another ballot measure aimed at improving the election process for the Board of Education. The Council then received updates from the Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department on the City's Comprehensive Shelter Strategy over the past year.

Here's what you need to know

- Mayor Gloria and Councilmember Campillo's proposed ballot measure for the November 2024 election, which includes a one-cent sales tax increase aimed at generating funds to address long-standing infrastructure issues, improve neighborhoods, and preserve public safety services, was discussed by the public and Council. The Council voted unanimously to approve the ballot measure.
- The San Diego Unified School District's proposed ballot measure for the November 2024 election to amend the election process for members of the Board of Education to avoid repeat elections has passed. Members of The Council are

hopeful that the ballot measure will help save taxpayers time, money, and clarify the election process for residents.

- The Council received updates from the Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department on changes to the City's Comprehensive Shelter Strategy. Since the Comprehensive Shelter Strategy's initial release in June 2023, the Department has added new beds, programs, and facilities to existing shelters, while continuing to enhance initiatives like the Safe Sleeping Program.

Immediate Actions

- Agenda item 200 was unanimously approved in a vote of 9-0-0 (yes-absent-no).
- Agenda item 201 was approved in a vote of 9-0-0.

Accessibility Issues

- No accessibility issues were encountered while on assignment.

Follow-Up Questions

- N/A

Notes

Meeting Call to Order: (19:11)

- The meeting was called to order at 2:04 p.m. by Council President Elo-Rivera.
- The agenda for this meeting may be viewed by clicking [here](#), while a video and/or audio recording of the meeting may be found by clicking [here](#) and [here](#), respectively.
 - **All timestamps below were taken from the video recording.**

Councilmembers in Attendance:

- Council President **Sean Elo-Rivera**: Present
- Council President Pro Tem **Joe LaCava**: Present
- Councilmember **Jennifer Campbell**: Present
- Councilmember **Stephen Whitburn**: Present
- Councilmember **Henry L. Foster III**: Present
- Councilmember **Marni von Wilpert**: Present
- Councilmember **Kent Lee**: Present
- Councilmember **Raul A. Campillo**: Present
- Councilmember **Vivian Moreno**: Present

Staff Present:

- Charles Modica, Independent Budget Analyst
- Mara W. Elliott, City Attorney
- Diana J.S. Fuentes, City Clerk

Agenda Item #200 – Consideration of a Proposed Ballot Measure by Mayor Todd Gloria and Councilmember Raul Campillo for the November 2024 Election to Establish a One-Cent General Purpose Transactions and Use (Sales) Tax by adding Chapter 3, Article 2, Division 1 to the San Diego Municipal Code: (21:04)

- Presentation by Michael Simonsen, Chief of Staff for Councilmember Campillo, and Matt Yagyagan, Director of Policy for Mayor Gloria:
 - Prior to the start of the presentation, Mayor Gloria gave an opening statement to the Council and public, introducing the ballot measure he and Councilmember Campillo hope will improve the quality of life for all San Diegans by addressing historical neglect of the City’s infrastructure. “Time is now to take that data and to take action, and the item before you this afternoon is the opportunity to do just that. Colleagues, together I believe we can build a city that not only functions, but thrives, not just for the present generation, but for generations to come. Together I believe that we can realize that collective vision for San Diego, he said. **(23:15)**
 - The aim of the proposed one-cent sales tax increase is to allow the City to enhance critical daily services and reverse long-standing neglect to its infrastructure.
 - The Rules Committee unanimously voted in favor of advancing the one-cent sales tax increase measure at the Rules Committee Meeting on June 5, 2024.
 - The General Fund, the primary source of funding for essential neighborhood services, is supported by the following four major revenue sources: property tax, sales tax, transient occupancy tax, and franchise fees. Together, these revenue sources contributed \$1.5 billion (72 percent) to the FY25 budget.
 - Although sales tax is the second largest revenue source for the General Fund, the City receives only 1 percent of the 7.75 percent charged per dollar. Increasing the sales tax rate to 8.75 percent would generate approximately \$400 million annually for the City.
 - The City’s current sales tax rate of 7.75 percent is tied for fourth lowest among the 481 cities in California and is the lowest rate within the County. While other cities in the County are considering raising their sales tax, 6 of the 10 cities bordering San Diego have already done so.
 - The City’s critical infrastructure is in dire need of repair or replacement after decades of underinvestment, neglect, and deferred maintenance. Approximately \$9.25 billion is needed over the next 5 years to address the

massive infrastructure backlog.

- The ballot measure includes provisions for transparency, accountability, and oversight to ensure that the funds generated by the one-cent sales tax increase will be used effectively to improve neighborhood infrastructure and critical daily services. These provisions include public hearings and quarterly monitoring reports to track and report on the one-cent sales tax increase, with funds collected will undergo independent annual audits.
- 400 likely San Diego voters were surveyed between May 1 and May 5, 2024, with the following question: “To repair neighborhood streets and sidewalks, update police, fire protection, paramedic and 9-1-1 equipment and facilities, improve parks, and libraries, provide enhanced citywide infrastructure and delivery general city services, shall the measure enacting a one cent sales tax be adopted, generating approximately \$400,000,000 per year until ended by voters, requiring citizen oversight and independent audits, with all funds staying in the City of San Diego?” 58 percent of likely voters indicated they would support the ballot measure.

- **Public comments:**

- **Shane Harris** expressed concern about the one-cent sales tax increase, citing the additional tax burden on residents already facing rising living costs and the mismanagement of funds in the past. “The fact that we know historically that you have misused these funds over and over again, and then ask for more money just to be more disruptive with the money you get. Please turn this down and send it back,” he said. **(38:52)**
- **Jeremy Huff**, Vice President of the San Diego Police Officers Association (SDPOA), expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase to fund and enhance the City’s critical daily services. “This measure is not about numbers. It’s about investing in the quality of life of every San Diegan,” he said. **(39:37)**
- **Rob Hutsel**, President & CEO at [The San Diego River Park Foundation](#), spoke in support of giving San Diegans the opportunity to decide for themselves whether to accept or deny the one-cent sales tax increase. “If the quality of life issues that are so important to all of us can be addressed by this, then let the voters decide that,” he said. **(40:56)**
- **George Duardo**, President of the San Diego Firefighters Local 145, expressed support for placing the one-cent sales tax increase on the November ballot to fund critical daily services and address San Diego’s long-standing infrastructure issues. “It is crucial that the voters in San Diego be given the opportunity to vote and raise sales tax by one cent. This additional penny for every dollar will go a long way to ensure the city remains the safest of the big cities in this country,” he said. **(42:09)**

- Peter Comiskey, Executive Director of the [Balboa Park Cultural Partnership](#), emphasized the need to support crucial infrastructure programs and maintenance across the city, especially in communities affected by the January floods, and expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase.
- Bob Lehman, Executive Director of the San Diego Museum Council, expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase on behalf of more than 60 museums and cultural institutions. “We recognize our city is structurally in need of sustainable funding to continue to meet the needs of our neighborhoods and the people who live there,” he said. **(44:32)**
- Becky Phillpot, a Commission for Arts and Culture member, expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase and for placing it on the November ballot for voters to decide. “The city needs the resources, and in this environment, this is the way to do it,” she said. **(45:39)**
- “Sign me up for a fiscally healthy City of San Diego,” said Kara Camden, a resident of District 9, in support of the one-cent sales tax increase. **(46:11)**
- Imani Robinson commented in support of the one-cent sales tax increase, citing neighboring cities that already implemented and benefited from similar sales tax increase measures.
- “We care not only about the arts, but also about our city’s fiscal health and wellbeing, and we’re concerned the city does not have the funding it needs to address many unmet infrastructure needs,” said Felicia Shaw, Executive Director of [San Diego Art Matters](#), in support of the one-cent sales tax increase. **(48:35)**
- Alec Beyer commented in support of moving the one-cent sales tax increase to the November ballot. “We cannot go back to the time of deferred maintenance,” he said. **(49:38)**
- Carmen Kasner, the local chapter president for the [American Public Works Association](#), expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase to generate the funds required to address both the upfront and long-standing maintenance of the City’s infrastructure.
- Joy Sunyata, a resident of District 3, expressed optimism about the one-cent sales tax increase, but voiced concerns about the council’s commitment to ensuring transparency and accountability of the generated funds.
- Tim Douglass, President of [AFSCME Local 127](#), supports the one-cent sales tax increase to generate the funds necessary to enable Local 127 to continue providing skilled work and services to San Diego.
- Vic Biances, a member of the American Public Works Association, expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase, highlighting the challenges faced by public works professionals and staff in maintaining the City’s infrastructure

on a limited budget.

- **Michael Zucchett**, on behalf of San Diego Municipal Employees Association, thanked Mayor Gloria, Councilmember Campillo, members of the Rules Committee, and staff for their work in producing the one-cent sales tax increase measure. “We strongly support you forwarding that work product onto the voters for them to decide, and we strongly believe that they will decide and they will choose for more emphasis and more funds for critical infrastructure,” he said. **(56:47)**
- Nate Watkins, a resident of District 1, expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase for the \$400 million it will provide annually to fund infrastructure projects like road repairs, street lights, parks, libraries, and piers. “I can absolutely get behind these additional resources, and I ask the City Council to advance this proposal to the November ballot,” he said. **(57:53)**
- **Fred Tayco**, Executive Director of the [San Diego Lodging Association](#), emphasized the need to keep San Diego competitive in attracting business and leisure travelers through the resources and funds provided by the one-cent sales tax increase.
- **Dr. Terry Hoskins**, a resident and candidate for District 9, opposed the one-cent sales tax, citing the measure’s language that funds “may” be used for neighborhood upgrades and concerns about past fund mismanagement. “This administration has lost the faith and trust of the people. I question whether or not these funds will even go to first responders. I encourage you and everyone else to vote no on additional taxes,” he said. **(1:00:43)**
- **Phillip Musegass**, Executive Director and Waterkeeper for [San Diego Coast Keeper](#), expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase to address the City’s historical stormwater infrastructure issues exacerbated by the January floods.
- **Lori Saldaña** commented on the regressive nature of the one-cent sales tax increase and questioned whether the generated funds would actually benefit San Diegans. “Use the money you have better and we would be more likely to have money to spend and increase the money that goes into the City without more sales tax increases,” she said. **(1:03:58)**
- **Carlos Christiani**, a resident of District 6, expressed support for the one-cent sales tax increase for the potential opportunities it will provide the City.
- Tammy (first name only), a small business owner, stated that although the City is in urgent need of resources to address its infrastructure issues, passing a one-cent sales tax is not the solution to make the City more attractive and competitive. She urged the Council to focus on travel and tourism to generate additional funds.

- “We cannot continue to reward and give these wasteful, spoiled, reckless and corrupt local politicians what they want at the time they want it. The money will not go to where they are promising, it never does,” said Consuelo (first name only) in opposition to the one-cent sales tax measure. **(1:08:03)**
- **Rob Brown**, on behalf of the San Diego City Lifeguard’s [Teamsters Local 911](#), expressed support for placing the one-cent sales tax increase on the November ballot to fund lifeguards and other essential daily services. “It is important that our elected officials have the revenue they need to provide the services the community wants, needs, and deserves,” he said. **(1:12:22)**
- Kathryn Douglas urged the Council to seek out vendors offering higher quality services at a more competitive price than their competitors to save money. “You can get the same product with far less money being spent and that would help our budget and our tax dollars,” she said. **(1:13:09)**
- “So I think before you impose another sales tax increase on the public, you should increase the efficiency of how the City does business,” said **Andrew Hollingsworth** in opposition to the one-cent sales tax increase in regards to past mismanagement of funds. **(1:13:54)**
- Kathleen Lipitt expressed a lack of confidence with the language utilized in the proposed one-cent sales tax increase measure that states generated funds “may” be used to improve neighborhoods.
- **Judi Strang** expressed a willingness to support the proposed one-cent sales tax increase measure but remains unsure due to doubts about whether the generated funds will be spent efficiently to benefit residents. “We question whether another sales tax will really help us. We want to support you,” she said. **(1:16:46)**
- **Council comments:**
 - **Councilmember Campillo** spoke of the Council’s efforts to address the backlog of deferred maintenance to the City’s infrastructure left behind by previous generations, citing the Council and Mayor’s doubling down on repairing roads, fixing critical infrastructure, and preserving City services over the past four years. “So as a City, we can continue to drive on bumpy, cracked roads, subject our children to outdated libraries and parks, and never fully get to the root of our neighborhood infrastructure issues, or we could invest, now, in building, literally building, the San Diego we all want and deserve,” he said. **(1:22:35)**
 - **Councilmember Lee** commented that although the City has consistently passed a balanced budget, there has been lack of meaningful progress in addressing various infrastructure issues, such as repairing the roads, sidewalks, and streetlights, funding nearly 200 backlogged Park and

Recreation projects, and improving public safety services and facilities for police, firefighters, and lifeguards. “When we’ve failed for generations to invest in our infrastructure and then to invest in the very people who deliver the services that our residents demand, we’re literally burdening our children and our grandchildren to solve our problems. So I strongly support putting this measure on the ballot,” he said. **(1:25:03)**

- **Councilmember Campbell** commented that she doesn’t want to give residents the impression that the projected annual \$400 million from the one-cent sales tax increase will be enough to fix the \$9.25 billion in infrastructure issues backlogged over the past century, but it’s a start. “I do want you to know that again next year we will face big budget problems if we don’t pass this tax measure. This will give us \$400 million and will help us to balance our budget next year and in the coming few years,” she said, urging everyone to support the one-cent tax increase. **(1:27:01)**
- **Councilmember LaCava** commented on the difficulties the Council faced in balancing and revising the FY25 budget to fund infrastructure, address the needs of the City’s most vulnerable residents, and ensure public services remain functional with the limited amount of resources available. “For far too long timid council members and mayors and disruptive agents with their own agendas have prevented putting this question before the voters,” he said. **(1:28:51)**
- **Councilmember LaCava** clarified to residents questioning why property tax payments are insufficient, explaining that the City receives only \$0.17 per property tax dollar, which, when translated into real dollars, is not enough to cover the cost of public safety.
- **Councilmember von Wilpert** recognizes that while expenditures are high for the San Diegans, the longer the City waits to address infrastructure issues, the more expensive and problematic the issues become. “If we have to have a full reconstruction of a road because it has been under deferred maintenance for so long, that is over a million dollars a mile to fix that road. If we don’t adequately fund this City’s infrastructure we will be passing on to the next generation a deeper and deeper pot of a backlog that would be unfathomable,” she said. **(1:31:17)**
- “I thought long and hard about this ballot measure discussion ... and I took the position then, and I take the position now: that this is a very simple decision and this is about core services, and what the city is obligated to provide. And in order for the City to meet those obligations, and to meet delivery of our core services, we need to support this ballot measure,” said Councilmember Foster in support of the one-cent sales tax increase to help relieve future budget

deficits. **(1:35:41)**

- President Elo-Rivera echoed Councilmember Foster’s sentiment, stating that the decision is simple: the City needs proper funding to provide residents with the daily services they need and deserve. “Sometimes members of the public ... say it more concisely, and even more effectively, than we can. Kara, a District 9 resident, said it perfectly: ‘Sign me up for a fiscally healthy City of San Diego.’ That’s it. Sign me up for that as well. This is how we get there,” he said

(1:39:23)

- Council action:
 - Councilmember Campillo, seconded by Councilmember Lee, motioned to approve of item 200. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote of 9-0-0.

Agenda Item #201 – Consideration of a Ballot Measure Proposed by the San Diego Unified School District for the November 2024 Election to Amend the City Charter Regarding the Election Process for Members of the Board of Education: (1:40:07)

- Presentation:
 - None.
- Public comments:
 - Carl Weinberg, President of the San Diego Education Association, expressed support for the proposed ballot measure to move elections for Board of Education members to the general election cycle in the event of two or fewer candidates, citing how the current system wastes the taxpayers’ time, money, and enables voter burnout.
- Council comments:
 - President Elo-Rivera thanked the San Diego Unified School District for the proposed ballot measure and expressed support, referring to it as “a common sense measure that, if approved by the voters, will save taxpayer dollars and clarify the election process.” **(1:49:35)**
 - “Making sure that we allow the School District to spend its money effectively is one of the most important things we can do for education,” said Councilmember von Wilpert in support of the ballot measure. **(1:50:29)**
- Council action:
 - President Elo-Rivera, seconded by Councilmember von Wilpert, motioned to approve item 201. The motion was carried by a vote of 8-1-0, with Councilmember Campbell absent.
 - **Agenda Item #S405 – Comprehensive Shelter Strategy: (1:51:30)**
- Presentation by Sarah Jarman, Director of the Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department:
 - The Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department released the City’s

first [Comprehensive Shelter Strategy](#) in June 2023. The Comprehensive Shelter Strategy was adopted as a living document meant to change and evolve based on the needs of the population.

- The results of the 2024 point-in-time count, a breakdown of the total number of sheltered and unsheltered individuals in San Diego, revealed a 4 percent increase in homelessness from 2023 to 2024, rising from 6,500 to 6,783. The majority of sheltered/unsheltered individuals identified as male.
- The majority of sheltered and unsheltered individuals identified as male, with 69 percent and 61 percent, respectively, while 29 percent and 38 percent identified as female.
- Compared to 2023, this year saw a significant increase in unsheltered families and youth by 113 percent and 76 percent, respectively, while sheltered homelessness increased for these groups by 9 percent and 10 percent.
- Adopted in 2019, the City's Community Action Plan (CAP) on Homelessness serves as a 10-year blueprint towards addressing homelessness in the City. Last year, the Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department presented an update to the CAP, identifying the need for an additional 410 to 820 crisis response beds for individual households and 55 to 100 beds for family households over the course of the plan.
- When the Comprehensive Shelter Strategy was initially proposed, the Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department aimed to increase shelter bed capacity by 600 beds. Over the past year, the Department has surpassed this goal by adding 934 beds, including new programs, facilities, and expansions to existing shelters.
- Since 2023, two new non-congregate shelters, the Travelodge Shelter and DV Shelter, have opened to assist families with children and survivors of domestic violence, respectively.
- As part of the [Safe Sleeping Program](#) introduced in the initial Comprehensive Shelter Strategy, the City established 20th & B and O Lot as safe and legal alternatives to traditional congregate shelters for individuals, couples, and households experiencing homelessness. From July 2023 to May 2024, the program accommodated 1,299 individuals across both sites, with 86 percent reporting they had slept in a place not fit for human habitation prior to their enrollment.
- In August 2023, the Department collaborated with the San Diego Housing Commission and the [Alpha Project](#) to add 50 beds to the shelter at 16th & Newton and 12 beds to the shelter at 17th & Imperial, bringing their total bed capacities to 326 and 140, respectively.
- The City's current total shelter capacity is totaled at 2,508 beds split unevenly

across 20 facilities.

- Between July 2023 and May 2024, shelter program data reveals that city-funded shelters served 4,773 individuals. Of these, 1,657 were experiencing chronic homelessness, 225 were children under 18 years old, 660 were youth under 25 years old, 209 were veterans, and 606 successfully transitioned to permanent or other forms of long-term housing solutions.
- The women's shelter located at the Old Central Library is estimated to close on July 19, 2024, while the Rachel's Promise, Golden Hall, and the Father Joe's Paul Mirabile Center shelters are estimated to close by the end of 2024.
- The prospective shelter at the Hope @ Vine campus in Middletown can accommodate up to 1,000 beds and aims to offer multiple shelters with on site resources, including showers, housing navigators, outdoor recreational spaces, pet friendly areas, a commercial kitchen, and workforce development opportunities.
- The FY25 budget allocated \$450,450 to the San Diego Housing Commission to expand the Salvation Army Family Interim Shelter with an additional 39 beds reserved for families led by single mothers. This family shelter expansion is set to be available by Summer 2024.
- The California Coastal Commission unanimously approved the use of the H Barracks near Harbor Island to expand the Safe Parking Program by approximately 200 spaces, bringing the total to 433. On-site resources will include access to restrooms, case management, housing navigation, basic needs assistance, and resource referrals, with the ultimate goal of connecting individuals to long-term housing.
- After discussions with the San Diego Unified School District, the former Old Central Elementary is being considered for use as a Safe Parking Site that would provide approximately 40 spaces for families with children to park overnight. On-site resources would include housing navigation, basic needs assistance, and resource referrals.
- Both Safe Sleeping Program sites at 20th & B and O Lot currently have space to expand capacity by 50 and 142 tents, respectively, increasing the total from 544 to 736 tents. The estimated annual upkeep cost of the expansion would be around \$900,000 for 20th & B and \$3.3 million for O Lot, with an expected opening by fall of this year if approved.

Reached 2-hour limit for note taking

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