

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR COUNTY VOTERS' PAMPHLET

Ballot Title Caption: Approval of a Police Department Operations Levy for Five Years

Measure Number: _____ Word Total (500 maximum) 318

Governing Body: City of Columbia City

Person Responsible for Content: Kim Karber, City Administrator/Recorder

Signature: Kim Karber

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Columbia City is proposing a five-year local operating levy at a rate of \$1.95 per \$1,000 of assessed value. If approved, this levy will begin in fiscal year 2027-28 and is estimated to raise approximately \$2,393,682 over five years. One hundred percent of the tax revenue will directly fund personnel, equipment, and daily operational costs for Columbia City police protection.

Columbia City maintains one of the lowest permanent property tax rates in Oregon (\$1.1346 per \$1,000). Except for Prescott (population 84), it has the lowest tax rate in Columbia County. Since Columbia City is primarily a residential "bedroom community" with minimal taxable commercial or industrial developments, the vast majority of local funding relies directly on homeowners.

In 2010, the City Council identified police protection as a critical General Fund service, but the total tax revenue generated by the City's existing permanent tax rate fell short of funding a staffed Police Department, so a levy became necessary. Columbia City residents have reliably supported local law enforcement through local option levies for fifteen years. The initial \$0.67 levy approved in 2011 was successfully renewed in 2016, and adjusted to \$0.90 in 2021. The current measure replaces the expiring 2021 levy to ensure uninterrupted public safety coverage.

This local option levy is for \$1.95 per \$1,000 of assessed value. For a home with an assessed value of \$300,000, this represents a total annual investment of \$585.00 (about \$1.60 a day) dedicated strictly to local public safety. This represents an increase of \$315 per year (about \$0.86 per day) over the current police levy, which expires in June of 2027. Property taxes are based on assessed value, not market value.

The current police levy is being subsidized by diverting funds from the City's General Fund operating resources, and is not sustainable. If the measure is not approved, the City will be forced to reduce police protection services or cut other City services.