



Legislation Text

File #: 19-591, **Version:** 1

Report Prepared by: Stephanie Dietz, Assistant City Manager

SUBJECT: Approval of the First Amendment to the Agreement with the Lew Edwards Group in the Additional Amount of \$53,000 and the Total not to Exceed Contracted Amount of \$82,000 to Develop a Public Education Strategy Related to the Possible Extension of Measure C

REPORT IN BRIEF

Considers the approval of the First Amendment to the Agreement with the Lew Edwards Group for an additional amount of \$53,000 and the Total Contracted Amount not to exceed \$82,000 to develop a public education strategy related to the possible extension of Measure C.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council - Adopt a motion:

- A. Approving the First Amendment to the Agreement with the Lew Edwards Group for an amount not to exceed \$82,000 related to the extension of Measure C; and,
- B. Approving a Supplemental Appropriation in the amount of \$53,000 of the unappropriated fund balance in Fund 061-Measure C to provide funding for the amended agreement;
- D. Provide staff direction on areas within the Public Education Strategy Related to the Possible Extension of Measure C; and,
- C. Authorizing the City Manager or the Assistant City Manager to execute the necessary documents.

ALTERNATIVES

- 1. Approve as recommended by staff; or
- 2. Approve, subject to notifications as conditioned by Council; or
- 3. Deny the request completely; or
- 4. Refer back to staff for reconsideration of specific items as requested by Council; or
- 5. Defer action until a specified time

AUTHORITY

City of Merced Charter, Section 200

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

FY 2019/20 City Council Priorities, Staffing - Measure C

DISCUSSION

On April 1, 2006, a voter approved general-purpose half-cent sales tax went into effect. Locally known as Measure C, sales tax funding has been historically used to support enhanced public safety services and local street projects. Measure C was approved for a period of 20 years, set to sunset in 2026. With the approval of the half-cent sales tax, a Citizens Oversight Committee was also created to create community accountability and ensure that additional funding was allocated in accordance with voter approval.

During the economic downturn, Measure C was used to stabilize public safety services by directly funding positions within the Police and Fire departments. As the economy began to stabilize, the City Council directed staff to develop a plan to transition positions from Measure C to more sustainable funding sources. A total of four positions have been transferred off Measure C support to date. Even with this initial progress, staffing levels are still heavily subverted by Measure C, with a total of 20.49 FTE remaining in the Police Department and 12.30 FTE remaining in the Fire department.

Measure C funding has become a critical funding source to continuing enhanced levels of public safety services to the residents of Merced. On July 1, 2019, the City Council recognized the importance of Measure C and directed staff to begin evaluating the development of an education strategy to test the viability of extending Measure C on a potential November 2020 ballot. In addition to seeking a strategy to extend Measure C in its current form, the Council also expressed an interest in exploring other options, including but not limited to, removal of the sunset date, potentially adding a quarter-cent to support Parks Maintenance, and evaluating general sales tax v. special sales tax thresholds for voter approval.

Staff are recommending that the City Council approve the First Amendment with the Lew Edwards Group in order to develop an effective strategy for a Measure C extension and fully vetting any and all options for November 2020. With the approval of this amendment, staff will begin a robust educational campaign and coordinate with community efforts to fully vet potential options for a November 2020 ballot. Regular updates on the progress of these efforts will be provided to the Council. Opinion survey testing is tentatively scheduled for early spring of 2020. Staff will return to the Council with a First Amendment to the agreement with Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, Inc. to facilitate the completion of a Public Opinion Survey within the next 60 days. A project timeline will also be presented during this action to the Council for consideration and participation opportunities.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

The original \$29,000 agreement was funded by the General Fund, Measure C, and the Police Station project. The amendment to the agreement in the amount of \$53,000 will be funded by Measure C since it will solely focus on strategy and education for an extension. A supplemental appropriation of \$53,000 of the unappropriated, unreserved fund balance is required and available in Fund 061-Measure C.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Lew Edwards Group First Amendment
2. Lew Edwards Group - Original Agreement