

Council gets breakdown of Measure S projects

August 27, 2022



If Measure S is eliminated by voters in November, it will cripple progress made at the police department, fire department, city pool and street repairs. That is the message the city council of Crescent City heard during a presentation last week.

City Manager Eric Weir told the council if voters eliminate the 1% sales tax, about one-fifth of revenue used to fund basic city services would be immediately removed. That would force the council to decide what to cut to live within the funding the city receives.

The presentation on Measure S came just after the council voters to establish the question voters will see on the ballot.

"We have spent a considerable amount of time preparing the question so it follows the law and make sense to what we're asking," City Attorney Martha Rice told the council. "After an absurd amount of time, we did come up with a question."

The question as it will appear on the ballot will read, "Shall the measure to eliminate the one percent sales tax approved by city voters in 2020 (Measure S), which applies within the City of Crescent City, thereby reducing funding available for general city services such as street maintenance/repair, the volunteer fire department, the Crescent City Police Department, the community pool, and other services, be adopted?"

City Manager Eric Weir then explained to the council what removing Measure S funding would do.

"Measure S is basically creating sustainability and resilience for our public safety needs," Weir said. "It really all started with the Fire Department Master Plan. It was a plan that was really designed around creating sustainability for our fire department. The plan addresses staffing, it addresses volunteer support and equipment."

"At the same time, we were also looking at the police department and staffing to maintain a sustainable police department. We also had the pool master plan. The pool master plan talked about the importance of the pool. It couldn't be more important for a community like Crescent City that is surrounded by water. Then we have our streets. They are in need of maintenance. Without Measure S, we simply don't have the funding to do what we need to do."

In 2020, almost 65% of voters cast ballots in favor of Measure S. As the funding has come in, it has been used on those four issues - fire department, police department, streets and the Fred Endert Pool. A community board oversees the funding, and an outside auditor did an audit.

Weir looked at the four areas where Measure S funding is helping.

Police Department

The increased funding has allowed the department to hire two new officers, a detective, add a second K9 officer and purchase needed equipment. The equipment includes four new police vehicles, Tasers, body cameras and dash cams for all the patrol vehicles.

In total, more than \$500,000 of Measure S funding is being spent on the police department.

Fire Department

The almost all-volunteer department has seen calls rise to between 1,800 and 2,000 a year. With the chief as the only paid member, the department still operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Currently, right now, it is basically all volunteers," Weir said. "This plan is to add three new paid positions. The rest of this department is still volunteers."

Measure S would provide \$307,000 annually above what was previously being spent. In addition, \$300,000 for equipment such as hoses, breathing apparatus and a new fire engine has gone to the fire department.

Fred Endert Pool

Weir said like most city services, the pool is designed to lose money. In the current fiscal year, a deficit of \$650,000 is budgeted. Measure S contributes \$380,000 annually. Most of that is for employees, with around \$50,000 for equipment replacement.

Weir said the city has been able to replace the HVAC system and is currently working to replace the locker room floors.

Street improvements

Crescent City has 23 miles of streets, covering 400 blocks, with 800 street lights. Many of the streets are in desperate need of repair and work has already begun in some areas. In addition, the city is planning to redo two blocks of Front Street along with repairs on K Street and A Street.

"We have Front Street and we have got to be able to chip away at it, and Measure S does that," Weir said.

"We would love to have all good streets in 20 to 30 years."

Weir said more than \$1 million has already been allocated for street repairs, which includes potholes, sidewalks, striping. All was funded by Measure S.

"When I was public work director, this screen would have been blank," he told the council, pointing at his computer screen showing the work being done. "We just didn't have the money. The funding wasn't available."

Weir said the city residents can also be confident the money is being spend like it's supposed to be. The city formed the Measure S Oversight Committee, which has met more than 10 times.

"They take their job very serious. They have done an outstanding job making recommendations that we then bring to council," Weir said. "All of these meetings are recorded. They are on the city's YouTube channel."

Measure S has brought in about \$2 million so far, giving the city the option to do projects that are needed.

"It represents, right now, 20% of our general fund," Weir said. "None of those things we talked about it would have funding unless the council decided there another general fund item would be reduced to fund it. You would have fewer patrol officers on the streets, you wouldn't have a detective position and you would still have an aging fleet on the streets. There would be some really hard decisions that would need to be made including less services from the fire department. You just can't run that number of calls with that funding."

After hearing from Weir, the members of the city council made the case for keeping Measure S in place.

Councilman Beau Smith, who opposed the sales tax measure when it was first voted on, said he has changed his mine after seeing the benefits.

"I don't like to pay takes, but they made a believer out of me," Smith said. "The transparency of the money that is coming in, it is being spent and it is being spent wisely. I don't want to see it go away."

Councilman Blake Inscore said he decided to seek another term on the council primarily because he is excited about what the city can now get done thanks to the increased funding.

"Everybody that lives in Crescent City can have the assurance to know the dollars that come in from Measure S are being used for what they were supposed to be used for," Inscore said. "It has put us on a good trajectory and it's exciting to see. I'm excited about those opportunities. This has positioned us as a city to do some special things for the people that live here. This is not about frills, this is about providing excellent service for the people who live here."

Councilman Ray Altman and Mayor Pro Tem Isaiah Wright agreed with their fellow councilors.

"I don't want to see it go away either. I am proud of the momentum we have, It would shut down all the progress we've been planning," Altman said

"We have definitely done a lot of good with that money, for sure," Wright said.

Mayor Jason Greenough wrapped up the comments, saying what is being accomplished with the additional revenue is wonderful for the city.

"Looking at this list, whether it's for the fire department or police department, the street improvements we've been able to accomplish, for the pool, I don't see any wants on here," Greenough said. "I see a whole list of things a city is organized to do. I see public safety, streets or at the pool, with teaching our kids how to swim. All the things the city has accomplished since Measure S has passed have been things that have enhanced the lives of people in Crescent City."

The measure to repeal Measure S will be on the ballot during the general election in November.