



## Minutes – Board of County Commissioners

Special Board Meeting  
Benton County Administration Building  
Commissioners' Hearing Room, Kennewick, WA  
Thursday, October 5, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

*Meeting provided in-person, by Video Live-Broadcast and Telephonically via/WebEx*

**Present:** Chairman Will McKay  
Commissioner Michael Alvarez  
County Administrator Jerrod MacPherson  
Clerk of the Board Amanda Pearson

**Absent:** Commissioner Jerome Delvin (excused)

**Benton County Employees Present During All or a Portion of the Meeting:** Deputy County Administrator, Matt Rasmussen; Information Technology Supervisor, Cody Shelton; Finance Manager, Linda Ivey; Sustainable Development Manager, Adam Fyall; Prosecuting Attorney, Eric Eisinger; Steve Caughey, Security Program Coordinator

### **Presentation Regarding the Public Safety Sales Tax**

Deputy County Administrator Matt Rasmussen explained that the Public Safety Sales Tax (PSST), approved by Benton County voters in 2014, is a 0.3% (or 3/10 of one percent) sales and use tax. This amounts to 30 cents on a one-hundred-dollar purchase. The collected funds are used for criminal justice purposes. The Public Safety Sales Tax continues to fund 54 local police officers and sheriff's deputies across Benton County and the cities within it, as well as four deputy prosecutors, a superior court judge and supporting staff.

- Board Discussion on Benton County Proposition 1 – Continued Local Sales and Use Tax for Public Safety Needs

Commissioner McKay shared his initial thoughts regarding the tax but clarified that he now sees the value of this specific tax. He also shared his concerns on a potential crime rate increase if the Proposition did not pass.

Commissioner Alvarez conveyed his support for the issue as well.

Questions were raised relating to this Proposition not getting passed. Matt Rasmussen explained if that were to happen, the county would potentially lose 10 million dollars that would have been otherwise used to support the criminal justice system.

County Administrator, Jerrod MacPherson, spoke on behalf of Commissioner Delvin's support of the tax.

**Public Comment**

A Finley resident shared his concerns about where the funds are being distributed to (ex. Health District, Boys and Girls Club), as well as other concerns.

- Commissioner Alvarez stated that he would like to comment at the end of the meeting to address overall concerns. Jerrod MacPherson clarified that if it related to the topic of the meeting, he could make these statements.

Eric VanWinkle, a member of the group Citizens for a Safer Benton County, shared his bi-partisan group's support to approve Proposition 1.

Commissioner Alvarez spoke to some of the concerns from the public comment period. He further explained that the Boys and Girls Club, and My Place are funded through this tax to help reduce crime. Both Commissioner Alvarez and McKay spoke to these programs being utilized as a preventative measure.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Alvarez moved to approve the Resolution to Support Proposition 1—Continued Local Sales and Use Tax for Public Safety Needs on the November 7, 2023 general election ballot. Commissioner McKay seconded and upon vote, the motion passed.

**Resolution:**

2023-285      Supporting Benton County Proposition 1 – Continued Local Sales and Use Tax for Public Safety Needs

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:26 p.m.

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Clerk of the Board

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Chairman