



**Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District
Work Session Meeting
Thursday, September 28th, 2023, at 7:00 pm
Hood River Aquatic Center**

In Attendance:

Board: Anna Cavaleri, Mike Howard, Nancy Noteboom, Martha Ortega-Verduzco, and Christy Christopher (online)

Staff: Mark Hickok, Marcie Wily, Kelsey Barnes

Public: Steven Scardenia (online), Ben Stenn, Aaron Baumhackl, and Lisa Merkin

Call Work Session Meeting to Order

Noteboom called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Comments from the General Public (3 minutes per person, per subject, Maximum 30 minutes public comment taken)

Ben Stenn: Owner of Celilo Restaurant, has lived in Hood River for 28 years, and asked the HRVPRD board to consider a different funding mechanism than the Prepared Food and Beverage Tax. He said that the pool should be paid for by the community.

Aaron Baumhackl: Owner of Solstice. Baumhackl stated that restaurants already have a very small 5% profit margin. He stated the proposed food tax would hurt small restaurant owners and agreed with Stenn that the tax should come directly from homeowners.

Lisa Merkin: Manages at Full Sail Brewing. Merkin says that restaurants are just starting to get back on their feet after the COVID-19 pandemic. She feels that if there's a prepared food sales tax people will consider not eating out. Restaurant owners want to help, but adding an extra tax line to their receipts will ultimately hurt them.

Steven Scardenia: Agrees with the above comments and had nothing more to add.

Anna Cavaleri mentions that there have been no decisions made, and notes we are in the very early stages of discussing this prepared food tax.

1. Strategic Update

Hickok gave the board an overview of the options the district has for raising the funds needed in order to build and sustain a high-quality park and recreation system in Hood River County. The district is hoping to get two items on the ballot in May 2024. First, the district needs capital funding for specific capital projects such as the new pool, Westside Park, etc., this will be funded through a General Obligation Bond. Secondly, in order to get funding for maintenance and operations of those items, the public will vote on either a local option levy, or a prepared food sales tax. Hickok then explains what those two options:

- i. Local Option Levy: The current tax rate is \$0.34 per thousand of assessed value on a home. A local option levy must be approved by voters every five years. Every nickel generated could generate roughly \$140,000 at an average household cost of approximately \$11.
- ii. Prepared Food Tax: The county would need to propose this option and would add a line-item sales tax to prepared food/alcohol sales. It could generate about \$3million annually and would cost average Hood River residents about \$90/year. This option also anticipates that the sales tax burden would be primarily on tourists. The prepared food tax option

would be shared funds between all agencies in order to improve all parks in the county. Hickok then presented the board with the pros and cons to each option. The board will meet with the other agencies in the county on Tuesday October 3rd, 2023 to hear there thoughts and ideas on the proposed funding options.

Howard made a Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20pm. Ortega-Verduzco seconded, all approved.

Non Notetaker
Approved
M Ortega
Attest

11-15-23
Date
11-15-2023
Date