

**City of Blaine**  
**Request for Council Action**  
**Meeting Date: September 25, 2023**

**Subject:** Resolution 1931-23, Adopting a statement of support for "Proposition 2023-04, Public Health, Safety, and Justice Sales and Use Tax" Whatcom County Proposition.

**Department:** City Manager/Mayor

**Prepared By:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Digital Signature)

**Agenda Location:**  Consent Agenda  Council Action  Unfinished Business

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**Action Needed:**

City Council approves the resolution which will signal Council's support for the public health, safety, and justice sales and use tax.

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**Attachments:**

1. Resolution 1931-23

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**Background/Summary:**

On August 7, 2019, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2019-036, recognizing that there are multiple deficiencies with the County's existing public safety (jail) facility, including life-safety issues. This resolution also established a workplan to develop a public health, safety, and justice facility needs assessment (Justice Project) and prioritize community engagement to guide its development and established a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) to guide the development of the needs assessment.

After Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2023-006, accepting the SAC's Justice Project Needs Assessment Report and identifying the next steps to create a Justice Project Implementation Plan in February 2023, the mayors of Whatcom County's seven cities sent a letter to the County that called on the County to place the sales tax measure on the November 2023 ballot.

On July 11, 2023, Whatcom County Council approved Ordinance No. 2023-039 providing for submission of a proposition to the qualified electors of Whatcom County pursuant to RCW 82.14.450 authorizing the collection of a local sales and use tax of two-tenths of one percent for the purpose of providing funds for costs associated with public health, safety and justice facilities and services, including behavioral health, supportive housing, public safety, and criminal justice facilities and programs. This ordinance acknowledges the cities' request to eliminate booking restrictions through the construction of a new, appropriately-sized jail facility based on a fair analysis of jail use, bookings, and population growth, taking into consideration strategic investments to avoid unnecessary incarceration; identifies and develops a mechanism for additional bed capacity if the facility reaches 85% of operational capacity.

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**Budget Implications:**  Current Budget  New Budget Request  Non-Budgetary

This resolution will not directly impact the 2023 budget.

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**Recommendation:**

City staff recommends City Council approve Resolution 1931-23, Adopting a statement of support for "Proposition 2023-04, Public Health, Safety, and Justice Sales and Use Tax" Whatcom County Proposition.

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**Reviewed By:**

City Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Finance Director \_\_\_\_\_ City Clerk \_\_\_\_\_  
(Digital Signature) (Digital Signature) (Digital Signature)

RESOLUTION NO. 1931-23

Adopting a statement of support for "Proposition 2023-04, Public Health, Safety, and Justice Sales and Use Tax" Whatcom County Proposition.

WHEREAS, on August 7, 2019, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2019-036, recognizing that there are multiple deficiencies with the County's existing public safety (jail) facility, including life-safety issues; and,

WHEREAS, Resolution 2019-036 identified the need to strive for conditions where the cycle of incarceration is broken rather than perpetuated, with continued support and focus on mental health and substance use disorder treatment and diversion rather than incarceration; and,

WHEREAS, Resolution 2019-036 established a workplan to develop a public health, safety, and justice facility needs assessment (Justice Project) and prioritize community engagement to guide its development and established a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) to guide the development of the needs assessment; and,

WHEREAS, Resolution 2019-036 concludes that "all parties believe there is a need for an improved County jail, and that voters will approve a proposal that addresses the communities' full range of needs and values with a combined public health and public safety initiative that focuses on reducing our need for jail by funding treatments options first, and is built with community input"; and,

WHEREAS, on July 14, 2022, Whatcom County Council received a letter from the mayors of Whatcom County's seven cities requesting that the County "dramatically accelerate" plans to build a new jail facility; and,

WHEREAS, on February 21, 2023, Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2023-006, accepting the SAC's Justice Project Needs Assessment Report and identifying the next steps to create a Justice Project Implementation Plan; and,

WHEREAS, on June 6, 2023, Whatcom County Council received a letter from the mayors of Whatcom County's seven cities recognizing their cities' role and responsibility in supporting this effort, collectively calling on the County to place the sales tax measure on the November ballot; and,

WHEREAS, on July 11, 2023, Whatcom County Council approved Ordinance No. 2023-039 providing for submission of a proposition to the qualified electors of Whatcom County pursuant to RCW 82.14.450 authorizing the collection of a local sales and use tax of two-tenths of one percent for the purpose of providing funds for costs associated with public health, safety and justice facilities and services, including behavioral health, supportive housing, public safety, and criminal justice facilities and programs; and,

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 2023-039 adopts the Justice Project Implementation Plan, which was developed with extensive community input and participation; and,

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 2023-039 indicates that adequate funding should be provided to accomplish the projects as established in the Justice Project Implementation Plan, such as construction of a new jail and behavioral health facilities and maximizes utilization of the remainder of sales and use tax proceeds for investments in behavioral health, re-entry, supportive housing, and diversion facilities and services; and,

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 2023-039 acknowledges the cities' request to eliminate booking restrictions through the construction of a new, appropriately-sized jail facility based on a fair analysis of jail use, bookings, and population growth, taking into consideration strategic investments to avoid unnecessary incarceration; identifies and develops a mechanism for additional bed capacity if the facility reaches 85% of operational capacity; and,

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 2023-039 establishes accountability, transparency and oversight mechanisms that include participation of a broad spectrum of local elected leaders, justice system officials as well as other experts and individuals who have direct experience in the criminal justice system and community-based behavioral health services; and,

WHEREAS, the Justice Project Implementation Plan strikes a balance between criminal justice facility needs and ongoing investments in incarceration prevention and community health; and,

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Council and Whatcom County Executive agree that voter approval of the proposed local sales and use tax of two-tenths of one percent for the purposes listed above will benefit the safety and welfare of the residents of Whatcom County.

WHEREAS, at the City Council's September 25, 2023 regular meeting, persons in favor of Proposition No. 2023-04 and those opposed to it were given an equal opportunity to share their views in an open public meeting.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Blaine supports the Proposition which would authorize a sales and use tax of two-tenths of one percent (20 cents per \$100) for costs associated with a new County jail, behavioral health, supportive housing, public safety, and other criminal justice facilities and services, as authorized by RCW 82.14.450.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, and approved by the Mayor on the same day.

CITY OF BLAINE COUNCIL

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Mayor May Lou Steward

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATE:

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Samuel Crawford, City Clerk