

2016 Ballot • FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

City of Thornton Regular Municipal Election • November 8, 2016



For voter registration information, call 303-538-7230.

Ballot Question 2C: Sales Tax for Public Safety, Community Facilities, and Redevelopment

“Shall the City of Thornton taxes be increased by \$6,000,000 annually in the first full fiscal year commencing January 1, 2017 and ending December 31, 2017, and by whatever additional amounts are raised annually thereafter, by increasing the City sales and use tax rate by two tenths of one percent (from 3.75% to 3.95%; 2 cents on a \$10 purchase/20 cents on a \$100 purchase) effective January 1, 2017, the revenues of which shall be used to: a) improve the public safety and security of City residents and businesses through the addition of staff, equipment, facilities, on-going operational support; the construction and on-going maintenance of public safety facilities including a new Police substation, a new Fire Station #6, the relocation of Fire Station #1, and providing a public safety training facility; b) make improvements to North Star Park and Niver Creek Trail and Open Space, and c) redevelop blighted properties in Original Thornton; and shall the revenues from such taxes be collected, retained and spent as a voter-approved revenue change and an exception to the limits which would otherwise apply under Article X, Section 20 of the Colorado Constitution, or any other law which purports to limit the City’s revenues or expenditures?”

Q: What is the money going to be used for?

A: The revenues from this additional sales tax will be used to help pay for improvements to the public safety and security of Thornton residents and businesses through the addition of staff, equipment, facilities, and on-going support of the new staff. It will also be used to help pay for public safety facilities, to make improvements to North Star Park and Niver Creek Trail and Open Space, and to redevelop blighted properties in Original Thornton.

Q: What kinds of public safety facilities will be built with the new funding from the sales tax increase?

A: A new Police Substation in Thornton’s northeast quadrant; a new Fire Station #6 on the Quebec Street corridor; the relocation of Fire Station #1 from Dorothy Boulevard to Thornton Parkway and Steele; and providing a Public Safety Training facility.

Q: Will the revenues from this sales tax increase be used for other non-public safety projects?

A: Yes. A portion of the new revenue from this increase will be used to further the redevelopment of blighted commercial property in Original Thornton (generally described as the area north of 84th Avenue, south of 104th Avenue, east of I-25, and bordering Washington Street on the west) and make improvements to North Star Park and Niver Creek Trail and Open Space. Thornton City Council also intends to pursue various grants and partnerships to help fund these improvements.

Q: Will this sales tax increase be used to help pay for the new Recreation Center (Trailwinds Recreation Center) in the northeast area of Thornton; to construct a new Senior Citizens Center at the existing Margaret W. Carpenter Recreation Center site; to renovate the Margaret W. Carpenter Recreation Center facility; and to rehabilitate and improve parks, open space, and playgrounds throughout Thornton?

A: No. The funding for these parks and recreation facilities will come from the sales and use taxes generated from Thornton’s parks and open space tax as well as the various grants and revenues Thornton receives from the State of Colorado and Adams County dedicated to parks, recreation and open space purposes.

Q: How much more will I have to pay in taxes because of this increase?

A: The proposed increase is two tenths of one percent. This means that a \$10 purchase would have an additional 2 cents added on in sales tax (20 cents for a \$100 purchase).

Q: Why would someone vote in support of this proposal?

A: The additional revenues are needed to pay for increases in staffing, equipment, facilities and on-going operational support that are planned to improve public safety and security, build much needed public safety facilities, make improvements to North Star Park and Niver Creek Trails and Open Space and redevelop blighted properties in original Thornton. There just isn’t enough money to do all of these things without an additional revenue source. All of these improvements to public safety and well-being are important to our community and build stronger, healthier neighborhoods and businesses.

Q: Why would someone vote in opposition to this proposal?

A: Although the additional tax may not sound like much money, for those already struggling to make ends meet, this is still an increase that will take money out of people’s pockets.

BALLOT QUESTION 2D: Medical and Retail Marijuana Sales Tax

“Shall the City of Thornton taxes be increased by up to two million five hundred thousand (\$2,500,000) dollars annually in the first fiscal year, and by such amounts as are raised annually thereafter by imposing a new sales tax of 5.0 percent on the sale of retail marijuana and medical marijuana, and any products containing marijuana or a derivative or byproduct of marijuana which shall in addition to the municipal sales tax on such sales, with the rate of such sales tax being allowed to be increased or decreased without further voter approval so long as the rate of taxation does not exceed 5.0 percent, and shall the revenues from such tax be collected, retained, and spent as a voter approved revenue change without regard to any expenditure, revenue raising, or other limitation contained in Article X, Section 20 of the Colorado Constitution or any other law?”

Q: How much is the additional sales tax on marijuana and marijuana products going to be if approved?

A: The proposed new tax is 5% which is in addition to Thornton’s 3.75% sales tax rate for all retail sales in the city. The total Thornton sales tax of 8.75% would be charged on all marijuana products.

Q: What does Thornton intend to use the new funds from the tax for?

A: The revenues from this additional tax would be used to offset any costs associated with the operation and impact of these businesses on Thornton as well as help fund general governmental operations which includes police, fire, streets, and parks and recreation services.

Q: Do any of the neighboring communities that allow medical and retail marijuana businesses have an “additional” tax?

A: Yes. Commerce City imposes an additional tax of 7%; the City of Denver imposes an additional tax of 3.5%; Northglenn imposes an additional tax of 2%; and Adams County imposes an additional tax of 3%.

Q: Is the Thornton tax the only tax on marijuana?

A: No. The State also collects an additional 10% tax on retail marijuana and shares back 15% of those revenues with cities that allow retail sales of marijuana.

BALLOT QUESTION 2D: Medical and Retail Marijuana Sales Tax CONTINUED

Q: Why would someone vote in support of this proposal?

A: Most of the communities that allow retail and medical marijuana have passed ballot measures providing for an additional city sales tax on the sale of retail and medical marijuana. The additional sales tax revenues generated over and above the base sales tax rate will be used to help offset any costs associated with the operational impact of these businesses in Thornton. The proposed 5% additional tax is in the middle of the range (2% to 7%) imposed by nearby communities and is appropriate because the number of licensed stores in Thornton is being limited to four. The imposition of an additional tax is important to ensure that there are sufficient revenues to address the impacts.

Q: Why would someone vote in opposition to this proposal?

A: There is no need to have an additional tax over and above the base sales tax already in place. The additional proposed tax rate of 5% is too high and when combined with the state and county taxes it may cause purchasers to go somewhere else that is cheaper.

BALLOT QUESTION 2E: Charter Amendment to Chapter 4 – Council Standing Committees

“Shall section 4-15 Organization and Rules of the Council Subsection (c) be amended to allow the City Council to appoint standing committees by ordinance or resolution?”

Q: What are standing committees and what do they do?

A: The term “standing committee” refers to a committee that is established on a permanent basis as opposed to a temporary basis. The Congress, state legislatures, and some municipal governments use standing committees to conduct the business of the government, with items having to go through committees first and forwarded on to the full elected body for final action. Some municipalities use standing committees for specific purposes such as an audit committee or a screening committee to interview applicants for citizen boards and commissions.

Q: Why were standing committees of Council not permitted in Thornton’s original Charter?

A: This provision has been in the Charter since it was approved by the voters in 1967. We do not have any documentation as to why standing committees of Council were not allowed. One possible explanation is that the people who drafted the Charter at the time may have felt there was no need for this since the community and corresponding volume of activities before the city council was relatively small.

Q: What has changed so that there is a desire for standing committees?

A: Thornton City Council would like to have the flexibility to create standing committees, such as an audit committee, to assist in the conduct of their business. Thornton is much larger now and having the ability to establish standing committees may provide a better use of people’s time and expertise.

Q: Who would serve on standing committees?

A: The proposed change to the Charter would require any standing committees established by the Thornton City Council to be done by ordinance or resolution and these documents would set forth the purpose of the committees as well as how the members serving on the committee would be selected.

Q: Why would someone vote in support of this proposal?

A: Because of the current language in the Charter, Thornton City Council is not able to establish a permanent or “standing” committee comprised of a subgroup of council members to do things such as form an audit committee or budget committee, although many communities have these types of committees. Removing the prohibition would give Thornton City Council more flexibility to create these types of committees and since this change would require such committees to be formed by resolution or ordinance, all information related to the committee would be available to the public.

Q: Why would someone vote in opposition to this proposal?

A: The business of Thornton City Council should be conducted by the entire group and not a subgroup.

BALLOT QUESTION 2F: Charter Amendment to Chapter 18 – Collective Bargaining for Thornton Police Officers

“Shall Chapter XVIII Collective Bargaining for Fire Fighters be amended by adding Police Officers to applicable provisions to allow Police Officers the right to bargain collectively with the City and be represented by an employee organization?”

Q: Why does the Charter have to be amended to give Thornton Police Officers the right to bargain collectively and be represented by an employee organization?

A: Chapter VII of the Charter establishes a Career Service System for personnel employed by Thornton and provides for a variety of aspects that must be included in the Career Service System including open and competitive examinations, probationary period, annual wage and benefit survey, fringe benefits (vacation & sick leave, holidays, insurance, etc.) and overtime pay, and grievances. All employees, including Thornton Police Officers, are covered by these provisions unless they have obtained the right, by amending the Charter, to bargain collectively for these items.

Q: Are there any other employee groups within the city of Thornton represented by a union, other than the Fire Fighters?

A: No. The rest of the employees are covered by the Career Service System rules and regulations as established in the Charter and by City Ordinance.

Q: Why should Police Officers be given the right to engage in collective bargaining and be represented by a union?

A: Public safety officers can be faced with challenges that are different from other Thornton employees and those challenges may be addressed through union representation.

Q: If the Charter is amended to give Police Officers the right to bargain collectively and be represented by an employee organization, does that mean they are automatically represented by a union?

A: No. The Charter amendment gives them the right to organize but a majority of the Police Officers who would be represented by a union must vote and agree to be represented by the selected employee organization or union.

Q: Why would someone vote in support of this proposal?

A: Police Officers can be faced with challenges that are different from other Thornton employees and some may feel those challenges may only be addressed through union representation. This change just gives Thornton Police Officers the right to organize and bargain collectively; in order to exercise that right, a majority of Thornton Police Officers who would be represented by a union must vote and agree to be represented by the selected employee organization or union. Fire Fighters already have this right.

Q: Why would someone vote in opposition to this proposal?

A: The Police Officers are covered by the Career Service System rules and regulations that are established in the City Charter and by City Ordinance which covers the same types of things that would be included in a union collective bargaining agreement.