Police Officer Staffing Levels Conditioned on Future Tax Funding*

Digest by the Ballot Simplification Committee

Status: Approved Digest
On: Wednesday, November 29, 2023
Members: Packard, Anderson, Unruh, Wong

Deadline to Request Reconsideration: 4:00pm Thursday, November 30, 2023

The Way It Is Now: The City has a Police Commission (Commission) that oversees San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) policies and approves a proposed budget for the department. The Chief of Police manages the SFPD's day-to-day operations**.**

As of September 2023, the SFPD had 1,578 full-duty sworn police officers. Every two years, the Chief of Police must recommend to the Commission the number of officers needed. The Commission must consider the Chief of Police's recommendation before forwarding the SFPD's proposed budget to the Mayor. Only the Mayor or the Board of Supervisors (Board) may propose amendments to the budget.

SFPD staffing and recruitment are paid through the General Fund. The budget does not have to include funding for the number of police officers the SFPD recommends. Also, the Charter does not specify a required minimum number of officers for the SFPD.

The Proposal: Proposition ___ would amend the Charter to change the process for establishing and funding minimum police staffing levels for the City, only if voters in a future election approve a new tax or amend an existing tax that would fully fund police staffing and recruitment.

In the future, if voters approve full funding, Proposition ___ would set the minimum number of full-time police officers for the City from 1,700 to 2,074 in the first five years. For those five years, Proposition __ would require the City to budget enough money to pay for at least the number of police officers employed during the previous year.

If voters approve full funding, after the first five years Proposition ___ would require the Police Chief to report the recommended number of police officers to the Commission every five years instead of every two. The Commission would also be required to set a minimum number of full-time police officers, which may not be reduced by more than 5% per year, unless two-thirds of the Commission votes for a larger reduction.

In the future, if voters approve full funding, Proposition __ would require the Commission to approve a budget each year that funds the minimum number of full-time police officers. The SFPD would be authorized to submit a budget amendment directly to the Board if it is able to fund more than the minimum number of police officers.

In the future, if voters approve full funding, Proposition ___ would create a fund for police recruitment that would last for five to 10 years. The fund would have $16.8 million in the first year and would change each year depending on the number of recruits needed, but would not exceed $30 million per year. The level of funding could be frozen if there is a budget deficit.

If the voters do not approve full funding in the future, these changes in police staffing and recruitment would not go into effect.

A "YES" Vote Means: If you vote "yes," you want to make the following changes only if voters in a future election approve a new tax or amend an existing tax measure that would fully fund police staffing and recruitment to:

- Set minimum levels of police officer staffing in San Francisco;

*****Working title, for identification only. The Director of Elections determines the title of each local ballot measure; measure titles are not considered during Ballot Simplification Committee meetings.*

- Require the City to budget enough money for at least five years to pay for the number of police officers employed during the previous year;

- Change the process of establishing minimum police staffing levels for the City, including requiring the Commission to request enough money to pay for minimum police staffing levels;

- Allow the SFPD to introduce amendments to its own budget; and

- Create a fund to set aside money to pay for police recruiting for at least five years.

A "NO" Vote Means: If you vote "no," you do not want to make these changes.