

# Public Notice

## Public safety fee

After two public outreach meetings, speaking with businesses, neighbors, and community members at large; the City Council approved a public safety fee to support 24/7 police coverage within the city of Aumsville.

**Background:** Discussion began as one of the 2017-18 budget committee topics after analyzing the current budget and realizing that some reduction would be necessary in police staffing, i.e. reducing the current number of officers. The forecasted numbers indicated that a decision would need to be made about this future budget deficit within the next 18 months, and the Budget Committee tasked the City Administrator with developing possible options and sending those options to the council for a decision.

**Discussions:** Of the options considered, the Public Safety Fee option made its way to the top of the list because it is sustainable, and in the end, provided the lowest cost to residents. The details were discussed at a number of public meetings, and information and opinion were gathered from a number of sources. The council weighed the impact of the fee against the impact of the potential of rising crimes within the city and the need of residents for an officer during times of the evening when, with staff cuts, there would be none available.

**Results:** The decision was difficult, especially given the impact of either choice. Neither choice was popular or optimal, but a choice needed to be made. The council ultimately decided to impose a \$12.00 monthly Public Safety Fee to every residence beginning in January 2018, with collection starting on the first bill due February 1<sup>st</sup>. The fee does include some safeguards, based on the public's comments. First, all moneys collected are required to go to police services; money cannot be used for any other purpose. Second, every residential unit will need to pay the fee; so apartment complexes will pay an equal share, based on the number of residential units, regardless of the number of water meters. Third, the public safety fee is the priority on the utility bill, meaning it will be paid or collected first; i.e. if the utility/safety fee bill is \$90, the first \$12 received goes to the police fund. Any unpaid balance will be for water/sewer services.

**What does this mean to me?** Residents will see this additional fee as a line item on their water and sewer bill. This is not a raise in your water or sewer rates; this fee is a dedicated public safety fee. Again, what this means is that all the money collected as a Safety Fee will go toward law-enforcement costs.

Why is this listed on my water bill? The city is using the current billing system, which comes out monthly, to reduce the costs of collecting the fee (i.e. more postage, billing statements, etc.)

If you have any additional questions about the fee, or your bill, you may contact city hall staff at 503-749-2030.