



Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - info@pchomeless.org

How will you talk with friends and neighbors about the Pierce County Affordable Housing Sales Tax?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 12.02.22

The Journey

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice --
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.

It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voice behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do --
determined to save
the only life that you could save.

—Mary Oliver

Talking points that were raised

- We need this money to do any work.
- Community resources are stretched thin.
- We can't do it without a public/private partnership.
- We can't have a healthy community without addressing the needs of poor people.
- It was nicely said in our group that this tax provides a Human Right.
- The cost of prevention is so much cheaper than picking up the pieces days and decades later; \$25 of insulin can prevent a \$25,000 emergency room visit.
- Talk about the savings from a reduction of costs for emergency services calls and social services.
- Emphasize the need for structural change (capital investment) instead of piecemeal efforts that don't offer any long-term solutions.
- Emphasize the small impact the tax will have on daily lives (.10 for each \$100 spent) while highlighting the big impact that the fund would have in providing/promoting housing.



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- Enumerate the change you want to see by applying sales tax - what the outcome could be.
- For communication, start with logistics. Numbers behind the need. Why this funding is necessary.
- Provision that jurisdictions will get some credit back is a selling point.
- It's all for affordable housing.

Questions and concerns that were raised

- Is there an elevator speech for this?
- Talk to your neighbors about it, especially outside of Tacoma. Talking about taxes is difficult. Folks here resist. Housing costs are high, property taxes are high. So keeping the narrative focused elsewhere would be more influential.
- Would like to see more mental health and behavioral health programs tied to housing projects.
- The sales tax issue is absolutely a concern as the perpetuation of a dysfunctional system that disproportionately impacts low-income folks. Is this really our only possible way to capture funding for this?
- All things equal we probably wouldn't support a sales tax, but given the tax system in Washington, it's pretty much our only option.
- Affordable housing is housing that someone working minimum wage can afford. Not just permanent support housing. City Council members need to be educated on the difference, so that funding can be utilized for both types of housing.
- Help educate everyone around you about the differences and the increase in elderly, fixed income and disabled individuals going homeless.
- Transparency is critical for collaboration. County and city should put out more information about how the behavior health tax has been used & how much good has been done. This could make a new tax more likely to be seen as having potential to do equally good work in another area.
- Added on top of the county wide 8% doesn't hurt to read. However, when compounded with other tax changes or in cities that are already higher than the state average of 6.5, the conversation is harder to have.
- It's also necessary to have a clear plan of what will be done with those taxes, and success or updates regarding past taxes such as the mental health tax, and how that impacted the community directly.

Noted regarding county politics

- There is a split in council. Dave Morrell is an ally in this.
- County could fund and Cities can apply.
- Dave Morrell is excited about the Community First Village but unsure where ongoing funding come from.



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- Our county has a large number of commuters who work and earn money in King County, but then live and spend money in Pierce County. A local sales tax captures King County salary dollars and transfers them to Pierce County.
- CoT - taking its tax success in to future budgeting and leveraging against funding availability