



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Conor McCarthy, Deputy Mayor
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution - Dedicated Funding for Gun Violence Prevention Programs –
November 12, 2019
DATE: November 7, 2019

SUMMARY:

I respectfully request the City Council direct the City manager to identify \$30,000 in one-time funds during the mid-biennium budget adjustment as revenue for funding programs that promote public safety, prevent gun violence, and help offset the impacts and costs of gun violence in the city.

This resolution would direct the City Manager to bring recommendations to the City Council on how to use these funds that:

- (1) assist and empower our local communities faced with gun violence, potentially in partnership with other agencies and entities, to help them heal from the damage caused by gun violence in our community, and to develop strategies together to further reduce youth and young adult gun violence;
- (2) make recommendations for programming with youth and young adults, ages 18-30, to reduce gun violence with concepts such as community court or restorative justice and gang prevention and gang violence reduction for individuals not in a felony situation, after consultation with partners; and
- (3) make any other recommendations to reduce gun violence in our community, including state and federal legislative priorities and other measures to be led locally to improve gun safety and ensure that guns do not get into the wrong hands.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Deputy Mayor McCarthy, Council Members Hunter and Thoms

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

- Strengthen and support a safe city with healthy residents.
- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.
- Foster a vibrant and diverse economy with good jobs for all Tacoma residents.
- Encourage thriving residents with abundant opportunities for life-long learning.
- Encourage and promote an efficient and effective government, which is fiscally sustainable and guided by engaged residents.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Tacoma spends nearly \$3.8Million dollars a biennium on services and programs to reduce gun violence. Notwithstanding these investments, the City is facing an increase in gun violence. Of the 22 homicides that have occurred in Tacoma in 2019, 19 involved firearms. From 2014 to 2018, there has been an increase of 37 percent in the number of criminal offenses in Tacoma involving firearms.

On October 22, 2019, the City Council held the first reading of an Ordinance to impose a new tax on firearms and ammunition.



The proposed tax is anticipated to raise \$30,000 per year. The front-end costs to administer the tax are initially proposed to be \$15,000. A similar tax in Seattle has been shown to raise considerably less than the projected revenues and has contributed to the closure of local businesses. The Seattle tax has also demonstrated declining revenues each year it has been in effect. In addition, after implementing the tax, Seattle spent considerable funds in legal fees litigating the legality of the tax. Given the lessons from Seattle, the proposed Tacoma-tax does not, at present, appear to provide a sustainable or significant funding source for gun violence prevention programs. Moreover, at present, the potential harm caused by this tax to Tacoma revenues to address gun violence and to Tacoma businesses, has not been thoroughly vetted.

In Tacoma, the potential impacts of the proposed tax on local business, local employees, and tax revenues has not been adequately investigated. If Tacoma businesses close, as they did in Seattle, will this tax result in less City revenues to address gun violence? Will Tacoma employees lose their jobs? Without analyzing and understanding the potential consequences of this tax, we cannot discern whether the net impacts of this tax will result in net positive impacts to our community, and more importantly whether it is an effective means to reduce gun violence.

Clearly, it is incumbent upon all of us to do everything within our power to address gun violence. Yet, in doing this incredibly important and urgent work, we must perform our due diligence to make sure that the policies and programs we support will be effective at reducing gun violence; and that they do not, in practice, cause more harm than good.

In order to demonstrate that the City takes urgently the mandate to reduce gun violence, and in light of the presently unreliable nature of the tax revenue stream, I request that the City Council direct the City Manager to include an additional \$30,000 in the 2019-2020 budget to support gun violence prevention programs. Securing these funds ensures unequivocally that the City will, at a minimum, match and contribute the additional revenues sought by the tax to address gun violence. Ultimately, given the urgency of this epidemic, the City cannot and will not wait to increase its investments in gun violence prevention programs.

ISSUE:

A funding source is needed to make additional investments in violence prevention programs and address gun violence in our community.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council could choose to reject the Resolution and reduce the amount of guaranteed funding available for gun violence prevention programs. Doing so would prevent the broad-based public benefits for residents of Tacoma related to gun violence to fund programs that promote public safety, prevention of gun violence, and help offset the impacts and cost of gun violence in the city.

RECOMMENDATION:

In order to demonstrate that the City takes urgently the mandate to reduce gun violence, and in light of the presently unreliable nature of the tax revenue stream, I request that the City Council direct the City Manager to include an additional \$30,000 in the 2019-2020 budget to support gun violence prevention programs. Securing these funds ensures unequivocally that the City will, at a minimum, match and contribute the additional revenues sought by the tax to address gun violence. Ultimately, given the urgency of this epidemic, the City cannot and will not wait to increase its investments in gun violence prevention programs.



FISCAL IMPACT:

This action will redirect \$30,000 to funding programs that promote public safety, prevent gun violence, and help offset the impacts and costs of gun violence in the city. The City Manager will identify the funding source to be offset in the mid-biennium budget adjustment.