

Agenda Action Report
Prepared for the
Cascade County Commission

ITEM: **Public Hearing**
Resolution 22-57:
A Resolution for a Public Safety Mill Levy
and Submit the Levy to a Vote of the Public

PRESENTED BY: **Josh Racki, County Attorney**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Currently, monies dedicated to the Cascade County Sheriff's Office and Cascade County Attorney's Office are not sufficient to maintain necessary services of the Sheriff's Office and County Attorney's Office. As Cascade County continues to grow in population, so too do the demands on Sheriff and County Attorney services.

Additionally, the Cascade County Sheriff's Deputies starting salary is approximately 26% less than the starting salary of the Great Falls Police Department and other competing law enforcement agencies. Similarly, the current starting salary for Deputy Cascade County Attorneys is 18% less than the starting salary of attorneys hired by the Office of Public Defender and are 17% below the market compensation-rate for a new prosecuting attorney in the state of Montana. Accordingly, both the Cascade County Sheriff's Office and the Cascade County Attorney's Office are currently having difficulty hiring and maintaining qualified and skilled deputy sheriffs and deputy attorneys to the extent that both offices are currently understaffed by approximately 20% in sworn personnel. Limited resources and personnel also limit the Sheriff's Office's ability to devote resources and personnel for additional school safety initiatives needed to protect county schools.

Further, Cascade County does not currently have a pretrial services/supervision program. Pretrial services and supervision programs provide a beneficial increase to public safety and provide rehabilitation services to pretrial offenders and such programs have been shown to increase public safety.

August 19, 2022

Agenda #1

Based on the foregoing, and pursuant to MCA §15-10-420(2), the Cascade County Sheriff and County Attorney request the Board authorize the implementation of a perpetual Public Safety Mill levy at 14 mills and submit such for voter approval as authorized by MCA § 7-6-2513. The revenue raised would be approximately \$2.46 million annually. This is a decrease from the 20 mills originally requested by the Sheriff and County Attorney. After reviewing public comment and having further discussion with the public after the Resolution of Intent was passed, the Sheriff and County Attorney re-worked the numbers and believe 14 mills is more appropriate given the amount of tax requested from each citizen. They request that the revenue raised by a Public Safety Mill levy be a dedicated source of revenue to fund Sheriff and County Attorney services for recruitment and retention services; public safety; school safety; and pre-trial services.

Two Motions Provided for Consideration:

MOTION TO APPROVE:

Mr. Chairman, I move the Cascade County Board of Commission **approve** Resolution #22-57: a Resolution for a Public Mill Levy and Submit the Levy to a Vote of the Public.

MOTION TO DISAPPROVE:

Mr. Chairman, I move the Cascade County Board of Commission **disapprove** Resolution #22-57.

Attachment(s): Resolution #22-57
Proposed Ballot Language

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
CASCADE COUNTY, MONTANA**

**RESOLUTION FOR A PUBLIC SAFETY MILL
LEVY AND SUBMIT THE LEVY TO A VOTE
OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolution No. 22-57

WHEREAS, MCA §15-10-420 (2) provides authority to the Board of County Commissioners to submit for voter approval a County Public Safety Mill Levy as authorized in MCA §7-6-2513;

WHEREAS, the current monies dedicated to the Sheriff's Office and the Cascade County Attorney's Office are not sufficient to maintain necessary services of the Sheriff's Office and County Attorney's Office;

WHEREAS, Cascade County continues to grow in population and accordingly, the demands on Sheriff and County Attorney services continue to grow at an accelerated rate;

WHEREAS, the Cascade County Sheriff's Deputies starting salary is approximately 26% less than the starting salary of the Great Falls Police Department and other competing law enforcement agencies;

WHEREAS, the Cascade County Attorney's Deputies current starting salary is 18% less than the starting salary of the Office of Public Defender and 17% below the market compensation-rate for a new prosecuting attorney in the state of Montana;

WHEREAS, both the Cascade County Sheriff's Office and the Cascade County Attorney's Office are currently having difficulty hiring and maintaining qualified and skilled deputy sheriffs and deputy attorneys to the extent that both offices are currently understaffed by approximately 20% in sworn personnel;

WHEREAS, Cascade County does not currently have a pretrial services/supervision program and such a program would provide a beneficial increase to public safety and provide rehabilitation services to pretrial offenders; such programs have been shown to increase public safety;

WHEREAS, Cascade County currently lacks adequate resources and personnel for additional school safety initiatives needed to protect county schools;

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners received a request from the Sheriff and Cascade County Attorney to establish a perpetual Public Safety Mill levy at a rate of 20 mills;

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners Passed a Resolution of Intent on July 29, 2022, to place the Sheriff and County Attorney Public Safety Mill Levy on the ballot during the November 2022 general election;

WHEREAS, legal notice of the August 19, 2022, *Public Hearing On The Proposed Mill Levy For The Support Of Sheriff And County Attorney Services To Cascade County Funded Through A Public Safety Mill Levy* was advertised on August 3, 10 and 17 in the Great Falls Tribune;