

## **CAPTION**

General obligation bond authorization for three City capital construction projects.

## **QUESTION**

Shall City issue \$8.2 million in general obligation bonds to finance City Hall, Pioneer Hall, and Community Center capital projects?

## **SUMMARY**

This measure authorizes the City of Ashland to issue general obligation bonds in the amount of \$8.2 million to finance capital construction projects, including design, to make these three historic City buildings safe and serviceable for decades to come: City Hall, Pioneer Hall, and Community Center. The proposed bond would cost Ashland taxpayers approximately \$0.2090 per \$1000 of assessed value per year. The average assessed value for a single-family dwelling in Ashland is approximately \$310,000. The assessment on a home with that value would be \$64.79 per year for 20 years.

City Hall, built at the turn of the last century, is substandard in terms of seismic survivability, energy efficiency, internal systems, ADA access, and interior functionality.

The Ashland Community Center and Pioneer Hall have major structural defects that currently limit or preclude their use for most community events.

Because construction costs are rising faster than inflation, postponing these three projects until a future election would likely result in higher constant-dollar costs and would not necessarily avoid the need for bonding in the future.

## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

Current City Hall is an 1891 unreinforced brick building initially built to house a fire station and a few administrative offices. A subsequently-added stucco exterior sheath and multiple other exterior and interior alterations in the last century have resulted in a structure that does not meet current building codes, access requirements, or energy-efficiency guidelines. The unreinforced masonry structure would likely not withstand a significant earthquake long enough for staff and customers to exit the building safely.

The majority recommendation of a 2017 City advisory committee on preferred City Hall locations was to keep it at its current site. Based on preliminary designs, the estimated cost for retaining a restored City Hall on the Plaza is \$7.2 million -- including final design, temporary relocation of staff, any necessary demolition, and construction work.

City Council will collaborate with the Planning Commission, the Historic Commission, and historic restoration specialists before approving final design.

The Ashland Community Center was constructed in 1922 and partially restored in the mid-1980s. It has housed local community meetings, dances, exhibitions, and other public and private events. In early 2019, the north facing wall began to fail, bulging outward such that the building became unusable. Structural repair will require, at a minimum, a new roof, ceiling, and wall and foundation repairs and will cost up to \$500,000, based on preliminary estimates.

Pioneer Hall was originally built in 1921; a restoration and expansion project was completed in 1988. Since then, Pioneer Hall has been available by reservation for public and private events. A 2018 assessment of Pioneer Hall identified a number of needed corrective measures, including roof structure repair, seismic rehabilitation, heating/air conditioning upgrades and ADA access improvements. These deficiencies have constrained use of Pioneer Hall, especially in wintertime, when a heavy snow load could cause roof failure. Based on preliminary estimates, rehabilitation of Pioneer Hall will cost up to \$500,000

If the bond passes and costs for these three capital projects prove to be less than currently estimated, the associated property tax rate will be reduced accordingly. If the costs prove to be greater than currently estimated, aspects of the projects would have to be scaled-back and deferred.