

**Salinas Californian Soapbox**  
**Steve McShane, Salinas City Councilman, District 3**  
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**Shaping a New Sales Tax for Salinas**

Nearly a year and a half ago, I inked a soapbox in this paper citing the need to do something about the state of public safety in our City. A 2012 community meeting I hosted in South Salinas profiled a string of crimes that suffered poor response by the police department. The reason? Lack of resources. As a result of that meeting, a diverse group of community leaders began to meet to discuss options. This came to be known as the “Special Public Safety Tax” group or Committee for Public Safety 2014.

[www.salinaspublishingsafetyfunding.org](http://www.salinaspublishingsafetyfunding.org)

Seventeen months of meetings resulted in some of the most detailed community based investigations of our City’s public safety I’ve ever seen or participated in. The group met with all levels of city staff in Code Enforcement, Police and Fire. While at least one local political columnist blasted the group, I saw a committed team of volunteers that truly believed a safe City results in exponentially better quality of life.

Six months ago, I separated myself from the Committee for Public Safety 2014 in an effort to be as objective as possible in considering all options for solving our City’s issues as a City Councilman. Several community meetings, hours of discussions and surveys prepared by the City resulted in my deeper appreciation for the City of Salinas and our needs.

My conclusion: The City desperately needs more funding for public safety and code enforcement. Those areas are paramount. At the same time, infrastructure and parks need attention as well. I’ll argue that poor financial planning results in the latter falling apart. No question.

On Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, the City Council hosted a special session to discuss options for solving the issues detailed above. I joined in favor on a 6-1 vote to put a 1 cent general sales tax measure on the November Ballot. The details will be crafted in the next two months and I can assure you that the measure will reflect the lion’s share of focus on a safer city.

I remain a strong fiscal conservative and it kills me to tax our way out of our present situation. However, you can only go so far on furloughs and downsizing. More than anything, the cost of government including healthcare, pensions and workman’s comp has forced us into operating the leanest city government (per capita) Salinas has seen in modern times. As I shared at City Council on the 25<sup>th</sup>, my work as a Councilman will only get harder should the proposed tax measure pass with voters. It will be important to see to it that lean government continues and every penny is spent well.

While I lost some friends with the anti-tax community, March 25<sup>th</sup>, I did what is best for Salinas and that is exactly what I was elected to do. I remain in admiration of the hard work the Salinas Committee for Public Safety 2014 put in and see each of them as key pieces in deliberating the details of a November Measure as it is carefully put together in the coming months. More importantly, I welcome articulate positions for and against what the City Council is proposing. Thoughtful discussion and debate is always good for government.

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