

**Kittitas County
Proposition No. 1
KITTCOM Emergency Communications and
Facilities Sales and Use Tax**

The Kittitas County Board of Commissioners adopted Resolution No. 2023-224, concerning an emergency communication systems and facilities sales and use tax. As authorized by RCW 82.14.420, these funds would only be used by KITTCOM to pay for costs associated with financing, design, acquisition, construction, equipping, operating, maintaining, remodeling, repairing, re-equipping, and improvement of emergency communications systems and facilities. If approved, the proposition would increase the sales and use tax within Kittitas County by two-tenths of one percent.

Should this proposition be approved?

YES

NO

Explanatory Statement

KITTCOM, a public agency, is the consolidated public safety communications center providing communication and 911 dispatch services for all law enforcement, fire, and emergency aid service providers in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Kittitas County. KITTCOM needs funding for modernization of its obsolete radio system to increase coverage, provide more capacity, and allow for better communication between and among first responders and dispatchers, who rely on the system for their own safety and the community's. If approved, this proposition would help meet that need by increasing the local sales and use tax by two-tenths of one percent (0.2%), two cents on every \$10 taxable event occurring within Kittitas County. These funds will be used by KITTCOM solely for costs associated with "financing, design, acquisition, construction, equipping, operating, maintaining, remodeling, repairing, reequipping, and improvement of countywide emergency communication systems and facilities," as authorized by RCW 82.14.420.

Returning Your Ballot:

Ballots need to be postmarked by 4/23/24, or deposited in a ballot drop box by 8pm - 4/23/24.

**Secure Ballot Drop Box Locations open for
this Election:**

Upper County:

Easton – 180 Cabin Creek Rd, Easton
Upper District Court - 700 E. 1st St, Cle Elum
South Cle Elum Town Hall - 523 Lincoln St.
Roslyn City Hall - 201 s. 1st St., Roslyn
Ronald Fire Station - Atlantic Ave & 1st St., Ronald

Lower County:

CWU SURC – 1007 N. Chestnut St, Ellensburg
Kittitas City Hall – 207 Main St, Kittitas (alley way)
Thorp – 10700 Thorp Hwy N, Thorp
Kittitas County Courthouse – 205 W. 5th Ave
➤ *west end of main parking lot*
➤ *adjacent to Auditor's Office, Ste 105*

**Drop Boxes close at 8:00pm on Election Day,
April 23rd**

Replacement Ballots:

If you have lost or damaged your ballot,
you can go online to get a replacement
ballot: www.votewa.gov

You can also stop in the office for a
replacement ballot, or call us to request
one be mailed to you: (509) 962-7503

**Kittitas County Official
Local Voters' Pamphlet**

Special Election: April 23, 2024



photo courtesy of Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce

**Registering to Vote or Updating your
Voter Registration:**

Anytime:

You can register online at: www.votewa.gov
By mail or In-person at: 205 W. 5th Ave, Suite 105,
Ellensburg

For this election:

Online & Mail-in must be received by 4/15/24. If you still need to update your registration or register between 4/16 – 4/23, you must appear in person at the Auditor’s Office.

Who can Register?

To register to vote in Washington, you must be:

- A United States citizen
- A Washington state resident that meets the requirements for voting mandated by state law
- At least 18 years old by Election Day, or 17 years old at the primary and 18 years old by the day of the November general election
- Not disqualified from voting due to a court order
- Not serving a sentence of total confinement under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections for a Washington felony conviction or currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction.

To view an online version of this voters’ pamphlet, visit:

www.bit.ly/VoteKittitasCo

Statements submitted by:

Pro Committee: Jim Allen
Against Committee: Jessica Karraker

Argument For

Kittitas County 911 (KITTCOM) serves seventeen public safety agencies within Kittitas County. KITTCOM serves the county with an aged radio system utilizing legacy equipment, mostly manufactured in the late 1980’s. These systems are past end of life and are no longer being supported.

The Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), performed a thorough analysis of KITTCOM’s infrastructure in July 2023. CISA identified multiple areas of concern; some of those findings are as follows:

- Multiple nonexistent coverage areas.
- CISA identified multiple critical systems that are beyond end of life.

Recommendations

- Additional infrastructure for wireless and internet communication.
- Hardening of KITTCOM’s infrastructure and security.
- Expand remote monitoring for security and reliability.
- Interoperability channels which can be activated or patched as needed to support interagency communications.
- Resilient backup power.
- Standardized radios across the network.

Our system has served us well but needs to be replaced. This is a local responsibility. Sales tax spreads the costs to travelers and recreational visitors. Law enforcement, fire and EMS support maintaining 911 services within Kittitas County. Outsourcing these services would result in increased costs, reduced staffing, and a diminished level of service. We ask for your support and vote for this important initiative.

Rebuttal Statement

Relying on travelers to help fund a new tax isn’t a sustainable solution for upgrading a system that has been neglected in prioritization for decades by our leadership. This tax will cost residents and be the third tax we pay for KITTCOM, impacting us directly. Rejecting this tax won’t affect staffing or services from police, fire, or EMS. It may influence who directs services if KITTCOM’s budget and current funding isn’t meticulously managed by leadership.

Argument Against

I served on the KITTCOM Citizens Advisory Committee. The decision to put this tax on the ballot was not unanimous. The proposed tax, unfortunately, falls short of addressing the radio communication dead zones caused by a lack of towers until 2030. Despite these challenges, existing measures guarantee the uninterrupted of 911 services, redirecting calls to Rivercomm, the agency overseeing Chelan and Douglas County. The "Radio Infrastructure Improvement Plan" by Adcomm Engineering, a phased strategy spanning a decade, enhancing communication and infrastructure relying on the proposed tax increase, generating \$2 million annually for a \$24 million budget. It fails to account for ongoing economic downturn, reduced tax revenue, potentially leading to underestimated costs and increased tax burden on local citizens. The plan neglects to factor in potential cost escalations due to rising inflation over the plan.

Furthermore, the Committee disregarded critical opportunities to discuss in detail applying for federal grants to fund upgrades before considering additional local taxes. Kittcom must prioritize pursuing these grants before advocating solely for voter-approved tax measures.

Acknowledging the need for communication improvements, a comprehensive approach is essential. This involves exploring federal grants, along with meticulous financial planning, minimizing the imposition of additional taxes on our community.

Rebuttal Statement

911 lines can be transferred to another center, however the radio infrastructure will still be ours. Our system places responders and the public at risk. It is outdated and we are largely ineligible for federal grants. The county paid a respected engineering firm to design a plan, with inflationary considerations to replace and upgrade our system. The only funding alternative available is to increase user fees (police and fire agencies).

Statements are printed as submitted and are not edited for factual or grammatical accuracy by the Auditor’s Office