Date: February 25, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers

From: Marti Brown, City Manager
(on behalf of the Law Enforcement Services Committee)

Subject: Re-establishment of Willows Police Department

Recommendation:

To negotiate an additional two-year law enforcement services contract with the Glenn County Sheriff's Office until June 30, 2028; and revisit the process and funding of a new Willows Police Department after the City has received two quarters of Measure I, the 1.5% sales tax, in November 2025.

Rationale for Recommendation:

Measure I's actual performance and revenue generation is still unknown at this time. The city will not receive its first check from the State for the new 1.5% sales tax until July 2025. As a result, it is judicious to wait and see how the sales tax performs before starting to re-establish the police department. In addition, once the city starts the process, it will still require at least 12 to 18 months of law enforcement services from the Glenn County Sheriff's Office before the city will have a fully staffed police department.

Background:

In 2017, the City of Willows dissolved its Police Department and contracted with the Glenn County Sheriff's Office for a five-year contract. In 2023, the City of Willows renewed its contract with the Sheriff's Office for a three-year contract until June 30, 2026. Concurrently, the City Council contracted with the Municipal Resource Group (MRG) to conduct a feasibility study and cost estimate to re-establish the Willows Police Department. The study was completed in the late fall of 2024 and presented to the Council in January 2025 (Attachment 1). With the passage of Measure I, the City of Willows may now financially and realistically consider re-establishing the Willows Police Department.

Discussion & Analysis:

HdL, the City's sales tax consultant, projected that the City will receive between $1.8 and $2.3 million in new sales tax revenue from the 1.5% Transactions and Use Tax that was approved by the Willows' voters in November 2024. The city will not start collecting the new tax until April 1, 2025, and it will not receive its first check from the State until July 2025. The City receives sales tax payments from the State on a quarterly basis.

As a result, the Committee recommends waiting until the city receives at least two quarters of new sales tax revenue (so that it may more accurately project annual revenues) before determining its approach to re-establishing the Willows Police Department.

As the current law enforcement services agreement with the Glenn County Sheriff's Office expires on June 30, 2026, the Committee also recommends extending the contract for an additional two years until June 30, 2028, and revisiting the process to re-establish the Willows Police Department in November 2025 (after the Finance Department can realistically project annual city revenues moving forward).

An extension of the law enforcement services agreement will provide the city with additional time to more accurately determine its actual new sales tax revenue, how much will be available to rebuild the Willows Police Department and establish a transition process over the next 24 to 36 months.

Consistency with Council Priorities and Goals:

The recommendation is consistent with Priority #3: Public Safety, Goal #1 Conduct a detailed financial analysis to restore the Willows Police Department.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact by adopting the recommendation.

Attachment:

- Attachment 1: Law Enforcement Services Report and Cost Estimate