

Tax Study Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 8, 2021, 7:00 pm

Via Zoom

Roll Call

- Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Connie Rankin
 - Members present: Connie Rankin, Jodi Cerminara, Molly Brown, Carolyn Laquatra, Ron Bedison, Sam Sesti, Justin Greenawalt, Christine King
 - Members absent: Sabreena Miller
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Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes
 - Moved by Carolyn Laquatra, Seconded by Sam Sesti
 - Approved: Unanimous, absent Sabreena Miller
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Clarification of EIT Data

- Question about whether EIT revenues for 2020-2021 are accurate, or should we utilize 2019-2020 data
 - Northgate numbers will be more accurate for our purposes than figures from Avalon or Bellevue boroughs, based on data reporting for fiscal year vs. calendar year, respectively
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Public Hearing Document Edit Suggestions

- Page 2: Should give history of the bill from the solicitor, along with vote history for Northgate when the referendum was on the ballot in 2007
- Page 3: Make clear who this benefits; not everyone is eligible to receive this benefit; percentage of homeowners and homesteaders
- Page 6: When talking about net neutrality, introduce the concept of volatility
- Page 7: Leaves out the comments about favorability and unfavorability from our original introduction to this tax study. Include balance
- Page 8: Wage earners, add demographic information about homeowners and renters

- Agreement that demographics about renters and homeowners should be included in the presentation
- Presentation of three charts including comparison of renters, owners, and homesteaders by age group; and, percent of income devoted to housing costs by age group. This information can be included in the presentation
- Question about Northgate's resolution exempting residents making \$12,000 and below. We don't have an answer yet.
- Include chart on income levels and effect on homestead/EIT from Christine
- Ron and Sabreena had talked about a one page primer; may not be necessary with Connie's document
- Can make any additional comments or edits via email, create final draft at next meeting.
- Can we include a works cited page
- Final section on impact: include how this might harm people as well, including how this would affect people of color; not just about who benefits, but who may also be harmed, we should be explicit about racial demographics

Review and Discussion

- Timing of events: Our board presentation on May 10, School Board would likely need to decide at their June meeting.
- Potential decision by the state on raising EIT would likely not be known when our decision needs to be made
- We have a right and a responsibility to not recommend, if we do not think it's a good idea for the community. The idea that the voters always know best isn't always the solution; this is a complicated issue and that is why we are here as a committee to determine the best course of action.

Public Comment

**Note that Sabreena Miller has joined the meeting at this point*

- Laura Pollanen, 132 Lincoln Ave.
 - Values the commission studying this fraught, emotional, difficult decision
 - Agrees that the word harmful must be used. Numbers do not adequately illustrate how policies might marginalize or harm people. We should include interpretation of data for the public.

- Responsibility of people in charge to take action that will benefit the majority of residents
- Bill Bergmann, 117 Beaver Ave.
 - The responsibility of the committee to evaluate this; its not our choice to send it to the voters
 - The idea that we can only move things to the public doesn't follow the spirit of the law; our role is to advise the school board
- Stephen Mehlo, 114 Cedar Ave.
 - The committee has an advantage and an obligation to the community because we have done the research; the public will not mull this over to the same extent
 - If we determine this is going to cause harm, then we have a responsibility
- Tony DiTullio
 - If we consider harm to people, also consider the harm that might happen by preventing people from buying houses
 - As a renter, one of the people who we are referencing, concern with higher renter population which increases rents
 - Important to keep property values low
- Sabreena Miller
 - We have been talking about people's capacity to understand
 - The commission has been focused on data, because that is helping us to learn who will be harmed by this and what is for the greater good
 - Feels that she has learned a lot in this small amount of time by being on this commission
 - Would like minutes to be as transparent as possible

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn by Christine King; second by Sam Sesti