

To the Citizens of Foreman, AR

I come to you today to try to clear up any misconceptions about the reallocation of the ½ cent sales tax which will appear on the November 3rd ballot. I would like to explain to the citizens on the facts concerning the city sales tax.

In April 1995, the citizens of the City of Foreman approved, by ballot, a 1 cent city sales and use tax. ½ cent of the tax collected each month is deposited in the city's General Fund. The General Fund account supports administrative costs such as salaries for the Recorder/Treasurer and the Mayor, utility expenses, and daily operational expenses for the fire department, library, museum, community center, city hall, and a monthly payment to Little River County for police protection, just to name a few. The remaining ½ cent is deposited into an Industrial Development fund account to be used solely for new businesses and developments within the city.

I understand there has been a lot of discussion and speculation via social media about the city's intent should the voters vote in favor of the reallocation of the ½ cent. I would like to address some of the issues that some of you have discussed.

First, the Sanitation Department, is currently in good standing financially. When the city began the trash pick-up, we purchased a Sanitation truck under a five-year lease/purchase program and trash cans and dumpster on a five year pay back. The lease/purchase on the truck and the loans on the trash cans and dumpsters will be paid off in approximately three years. The Sanitation Fund is a "restricted" fund which means the money the city will generate in sanitation has to be used by the Sanitation Department. The city can buy equipment that can be used in the city if it is used 51% of the time in Sanitation or used for Sanitation. The city can also hire full time employees for the Sanitation Department thus relieving the burden on the other departments.

Currently the city has four employees to maintain streets, water, wastewater, and sanitation. These employees work hard, and some days are a real challenge to meet all the needs of the city. The employees working in the water and street departments are the ones out there in the middle of a stormy night

cutting trees out of the road and fixing water and sewer lines at all hours of the night. Let them know you appreciate the work they are doing!

We are slowly trying to upgrade some of our equipment in these departments to provide the employees with the tools and proper equipment needed to do their jobs with minimal down time. Some of our equipment is fifteen to twenty years old. The city does not have the funds to purchase the high dollar equipment, so we try to use the five-year lease/purchase option. Using this option, we can work it into the budget and still meet our other obligations.

The monies in the water, wastewater, street, and sanitation funds are restricted to only be used by that fund/department.

One of the major complaints I hear are about the potholes in the city streets. Don't get me wrong, I agree that we have major problems with our streets. A lot of the streets need more than patching and the city does not have the equipment needed to properly repair the base and pave the streets. While we call it the Street Department, the scope of the work involves much more than patching roads. They also mow/bush-hog the grass, trim bushes, weeds, and trees, spray weedkiller all over the city, as well as, maintain all three parks (recreation park, city park, and roadside park at the south end of town). They hang the decorations around the city so you can have a festive environment during the holidays. The Street department is the most under-funded department in the city. The Street fund depends on State turnback money for funding.

Another issue that will be on the November 3rd ballot is the ½ cent gas tax which will expire in 2021. The State is asking that this tax be renewed. A ½ cent doesn't make much difference at the gas pump, but it **will** make a big difference to the City and County Turnback monies. This has a direct effect to the funding of your Road/Street departments if it is not renewed.

The Water department tries to keep the cost to our customers at a minimum. Unfortunately, since the city purchases water from RDA, there are things outside our control such as the cost of the water and water quality. RDA is responsible for treating the water that is delivered to the City of Foreman. The City of Foreman is committed to providing safe drinking water flowing to your home or business.

A new pickup was purchased this year for the Water Department. The city has not purchased a pickup in ten years. We are not spending money as fast as we get it. We try to make what we have work until we cannot fix it anymore.

We are asking that the citizens approve the reallocation of the ½ cent sales tax that you already pay, that is currently going into the Industrial Development Fund. If the reallocation is approved by the voters, the ½ cent sales tax going forward would be put into an infrastructure account the City can use for parks, streets, industrial development, water, and wastewater, etc. This infrastructure account will only be used with a majority vote of the city council on projects that are brought before them. It will take some time to accumulate money in this account, but I feel by reallocating these funds we are building for the future.

The existing Industrial Development Fund and the existing monies will remain intact to be used only for its intended purpose as voted on in 1995. We have used Industrial Development funds over the years to help Miller Bowie Supply, Livestock Nutrition Center, Dollar General, etc. A project that will be starting soon is the renovation of the old Regions Bank building owned by the city where Little River Hospital is opening a Clinic. The city is extremely interested in seeing Foreman grow!

I hope that I have answered all your questions. Feel free to contact me at foremanmayor@outlook.com or 870-542-6050.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William B. Harp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William B. Harp
Mayor, City of Foreman