

City leaders want neighborhood councils to support tax
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By Rick Orlov, Columnist
(Excerpt from column)

In a bid to tap into the energy and growing influence of neighborhood councils, Mayor James Hahn and the City Council are asking the advisory panels to consider supporting a half-cent sales tax measure on the May 18 ballot to finance hiring more cops.

The first meeting on the issue is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Kaiser Permanente regional laboratory, 11668 Sherman Way, Panorama City, with five others scheduled the following week at various locations around the city.

Police and fire officials will explain why they need additional money. Organizers have not invited opponents, who have expressed concern that a higher sales tax would place Los Angeles businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

The City Council needs to act by Jan. 26 to place any measure on the May 18 ballot.

In a memo to neighborhood council leaders, Greg Nelson, general manager of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, notes the panels will be walking a fine line.

"The issue before the house is whether the City Council should place a measure on the ballot ... and what that measure should look like," Nelson wrote, noting that the City Charter grants the City Council power to do that.

If a measure is placed on the ballot, he added, the issue becomes a political matter, and the neighborhood panels' activities legally become severely restricted.