

City of Brier Proposition No. 1

Levy Lid Lift for Brier Police and Governmental Services

Brier Resolution 608 calls for this proposition to fund the police department and governmental services by authorizing an increase to the regular property tax levy by \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value, for a total levy rate of \$1.07821 per \$1,000 of assessed value, for collection in 2026. The 2026 levy amount will be the basis to compute future levies (subject to 1% limit). Low-income seniors and disabled homeowners may be exempt from this increase.

Should this proposition be approved?

- Yes
- No

Explanatory Statement

The City of Brier seeks voter approval to increase its regular property tax levy to \$1.07821 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This increase remains well below the City’s maximum allowable rate of \$1.889 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Under state law, the total property tax levy rate is limited to a 1% annual increase each year, which has not kept pace with inflation. Voter approval of Proposition 1 will fund additional Brier Police Department personnel and maintain existing service levels for police, public safety and other essential City services.

Proposition 1 would authorize the increase of the City’s levy rate by approximately \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value, with collection starting in 2026. This would add approximately \$37 per month to the property tax bill for a home assessed at Brier’s average value of \$865,300 as noted in the 2024 BERK financial analysis report. The 2026 levy amount will be used as the basis to calculate future levies in succeeding years (limited by law to 1% per year). Low-income seniors and low-income disabled homeowners may qualify for exemption from the increase.

Please do not use voters’ pamphlet to cast your vote. Use the official ballot.

Argument in Favor

Voting yes is an investment in Brier’s future. It will enhance the city’s financial stability and long-term ability to adequately fund police and other essential services.

Brier runs on a lean budget focused on providing only the most essential municipal services. Having our own Brier Police Department is a priority. Our city budget reflects that. The bulk of general fund spending (51%) is dedicated to police and public safety. We have a city police department that is professional, responsive and community focused.

Our city property tax levy is the primary source of revenue for Brier’s general fund. Inflation has far outpaced our property tax revenue growth, which is limited by state law to a 1% annual increase. The city now faces an annual deficit of \$500,000. If we don’t increase our levy rate, Brier will have a negative balance in 2029 (based on the Berk Report, an independent financial analysis available on the city website, www.ci.brier.wa.us).

This proposition will raise the rate of our existing city property taxes to generate the additional funding necessary to maintain police and municipal services and provide financial stability. The rate increase is \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value. That would amount to a \$500 increase for a house with an assessed value of \$1,000,000.

By supporting this tax levy increase you will ensure that Brier has adequate funding for a well-functioning police department and other vital services.

Please vote yes.

Response to Argument Against

City expenses are exceeding revenues. Larger than anticipated cost increases have accelerated the deficit timeline in the 2023 Berk report. The 2025 study indicates Brier will be broke by 2029 if we don’t act. This is the right time for a levy increase and it’s crucial to Brier’s future. If we don’t do this now we may not get another chance to keep up with inflation. Vote yes.

Argument prepared by: Leslie Hynes, Steve DeKoekkoek, and Dave Johnson

Arguments are the opinion of the committee and are not checked for factual or grammatical accuracy.

Argument Against

Can the BERK report be trusted?

In April 2023, the Brier City Council used a BERK report to persuade the community to annex into the South County Regional Fire Authority (SCRFA), projecting a General Fund balance of \$1.8 million by 2029.

However, the 2024 BERK analysis now suggests a \$0.4 million deficit by the same year. While neighboring cities chose to “give back” the remaining EMS levy, Brier kept \$0.37 per \$1,000 in 2024. These shifting projections undermine confidence in the report’s accuracy.

The BERK report uses Sultan as a peer city. Sultan has a lower sales tax rate of 9.1% retaining 2.6%, while Brier’s sales tax is 10.5 retaining 4%. Sultan’s median home sale price is \$570,000 compared to Brier’s \$1.8 million. If Sultan can afford to hire more employees without additional revenue, Brier should be able to do so given its higher sales tax rate and more expensive real estate.

This measure *nearly doubles* property taxes in 2025 from \$0.58 to \$1.078 per \$1,000 of assessed value. For a property valued at \$850,000, the tax increase is over \$423 annually. On top of that, there was an additional \$500 this year for the education levy and about \$900 for the Regional Fire Authority. Given the inconsistencies in the BERK report and current economic pressures, this is not the right time for a massive tax hike.

Vote no on this excessive levy lid increase!

Response to Argument in Favor

Voting no is a stand against unnecessary tax hikes that burden hardworking families and residents on fixed incomes. While essential services matter, reckless spending isn’t the answer. The city must cut costs, like excessive overtime, before demanding more from taxpayers. The police department will be overstaffed with a chief, lieutenant, and two sergeants for just six officers. With more hikes looming, Brier must budget smarter, alleviating the financial burden on residents.

Argument prepared by: Jacqueline Vandivort