

# Officials recommend split for proposed 0.25 percent sales tax

- [By JONATHAN GALLARDO News Record Writer \[jgallardo@gillette newsrecord.net\]\(mailto:jgallardo@gillette newsrecord.net\)](#)



Teacher Klancee Britton wheels a basket of water into a classroom Wednesday during a summer GED class at Gillette College.  
News Record Photo/ Ed Glazar

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The memorandum of understanding between Gillette College and Energy Capital Economic Development for a proposed 0.25 percent sales tax is not quite ready yet, but officials from the two groups have come up with a recommendation on how that money would be distributed.

Sixty-five percent of the tax proceeds would go to the college, 30 percent to economic development and 5 percent to collaborative projects between the two groups, said Gillette College CEO Mark Englert.

He emphasized that these percentages are not final and that they could change based on feedback from the public.

Englert said the tax could bring in \$6 million a year, meaning the college would get \$3.9 million and economic development \$1.8 million, leaving \$300,000 to be spent on shared projects.

He said he and Phil Christopherson, executive director of Energy Capital Economic Development, “had some good conversations about what we thought was a reasonable way to split the tax proceeds. It’s a recommendation that Phil and I support.”

The agreement is in the hands of attorneys representing the five entities, and it should be up for approval from the city of Gillette, Campbell County and town of Wright within the next two weeks.

“We all left it as, you get it to a place where you’re OK with it and bring it forward to us to approve,” said Commissioner Mark Christensen. “There was a broad consensus that they would bring it forward as soon as they could.”

“I think we have the foundation of agreement,” Christopherson said about a Tuesday meeting with the five parties discussing the legal aspects of the agreement.

Christensen said he didn’t know where Wright stands, but Christopherson said he’s “pretty confident that they will” go with it.

It should be up in front of the commissioners at their morning workshop Aug. 31, and up for approval at their Sept. 6 meeting, Christensen said.

He said the response from the public toward the tax has been unusual.

“The people are either 100 percent for it or they are adamantly against it,” he said. “Usually, there is kind of a middle ground, but this one, there’s not. It’s unusual.”

Christopherson said he’s fielded some questions from people who have thought the tax meant they would have to pay \$25 for every \$100 they spend, when in reality, it’s 25 cents for every \$100.

“They were quite upset we were going to tax them that much,” Christopherson said. “If that were the case, I’d be upset too.”

### Questions and answers

The John Patriot Group, a grassroots effort started in Gillette in 2013, is hosting a town hall meeting at the Campbell County Public Library on Thursday evening to discuss the tax, which is set to go on a special election ballot on Nov. 7.

The tax would be on discretionary goods, or non-essential items, which excludes things like groceries, gas and services.

Christensen encouraged anyone who might have questions about the tax to attend.

“It’s a good place to get questions answered,” he said. “Mark (Englert) and Phil (Christopherson) are going to be on that panel, Norine Kasperik, she’ll do a great job, she understands all the legislative issues too.”

“The thing that we’ll do is continue to tell our story, present facts. Our job is to educate the public,” Englert said, recognizing that “there are people that we won’t convince.”

There also will be people speaking against the tax, including state Rep. Scott Clem and Sven Larson, an economist for the think tank Republic Free Choice and author of the blog, “The Wyoming Prosperity Project.”