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Orindans Needed to Monitor School Parcel Tax Use

Laurie Snyder

The Orinda Union School District (OUSD) has issued a call to Orinda residents for help in implementing a critically important component of Measure B, the \$124 per year tax per parcel that was passed by voters in March 2009. Qualified and interested individuals are being asked to serve on an Oversight Committee to ensure that proceeds from this parcel tax are being used for their intended purpose, which is described in the following original ballot wording available from the League of Women Voters California web site (www.smartvoter.org/ca/cc/):

"To provide secure local funding for all Orinda K-8 students; reduce the impact of state budget cuts; maintain small class sizes and neighborhood schools; attract and retain skilled, qualified teachers with competitive compensation and training; and protect classroom programs and strong core academics ... with citizen oversight, no funds used for administrators' salaries, and every dollar staying in Orinda Union School District."

The \$124 tax is an additional levy over and above the annual parcel tax of \$385. Anyone 65 years of age or older, who owns and occupies a parcel but whose income does not exceed 50 percent of the area's median income, may not be required to pay the Measure B tax, and should visit the OUSD web site for guidance on how to apply for an exemption. Parcels on which property taxes will not be levied in a specific tax year or that are otherwise not required to pay property taxes may also be exempt from the special Measure B tax.

According to Pat Rudebusch, Vice-President of OUSD's Board of Trustees, the district is seeking to build an Oversight Committee with the broadest representation of Orinda possible. It will be comprised of five to seven individuals who have children enrolled in the OUSD, as well as Orinda residents who are non-parents. The ideal candidates, said Rudebusch, are those with an interest in public education and who can "take information with an open mind and work collaboratively with other committee members."

Residents wishing to serve on the Oversight Committee must be able to meet twice annually during standard business hours, and must also each commit to completing two-year terms. In addition to reviewing parcel tax expenditures, the panel will also provide an annual report for the Board of Trustees and general public recapping how Measure B funds were spent.

Anyone interested in performing this community service should visit the OUSD web site (www.orindaschools.org/) to obtain the required application form and submit no later than November 10, 2011 to: Superintendent's Office, Orinda Union School District, 8 Altarinda Road, Orinda, CA 94563. Applicants may also submit their materials to Kathy Frenklach, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent, by fax or e-mail: (925) 254-5261; kfrenklach@orinda.k12.ca.us.

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