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Another School Parcel Tax in Moraga's Future?

By Sophie Braccini

Disappointment over the recent defeat of Measure A, the school parcel tax, didn't dampen Moraga School District Superintendent Bruce Burns' community spirit. The good-natured Burns took to the unstable seat of the dunk tank at the Community Faire and went under a few times, in his tie, for the benefit of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. As he dried off, Burns commented about the night of May 8 that saw the defeat of the ballot measure the District had hoped would support its operations in the coming years. "We took a big swing and missed," he said, "but we're not out."

The Superintendent said that trying again was the District's only option. "If the Governor's Tax Initiative passes in November there will still be a negative impact on our schools," he said. "If it does not pass, the cuts will have to be even deeper."

Burns said that he and his team will review what went wrong this time, and consider the timing of another ballot measure.

"We will analyze the results to understand what we could do better," he said. Of the 10,172 registered voters, 5,577 returned their mail-in ballots;3,718 voted yes, about 100 votes shy of the two-thirds approval such a measure requires. Burns believes that it is important for the District to understand which group of the population voted no and perhaps restructure the measure to gain more support.

"This measure had no sunset. Maybe we should make it a seven-year tax; we could also review different levels of exemption," he said.

"The economy is, of course, also a huge factor," added Burns. "Although we are disappointed, we are not discouraged, and we want to tell the story of our successes and accomplishments, so the whole community continues to support its schools."

Moraga School District Refinances Bond to Save Taxpayers Money

Moraga taxpayers will see a decrease of $21 on their property tax bill due to the refinancing of the school district's outstanding bonds. With municipal bond rates at historic lows and a high quality credit rating of "AA" from Standard & Poor's, the District was able to refinance at an all-in cost of 1.23 percent.

The refinancing will not affect the district's operating costs or provide any additional resources to the district. The original bonds were issued in 1996 and refinanced once before, in 2002. Combined with the refinancing in 2002, which reduced payments by $760,000, the current 2012 refinancing brings the savings to taxpayers to $1.83 million in general obligation bond repayment.

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