



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published October 10th, 2012

Orinda's Measure L

By Laurie Snyder

On November 6, Orindans will be asked to ante up and kick in to support efforts by the City of Orinda to create a stable source of funding to repair and then maintain the community's roads and drains for the foreseeable future. The Orinda City Services and Infrastructure Measure - also known as Measure L - will enable voters to approve or reject a temporary half-cent increase to the City's current sales tax rate that would raise the rate from 8.25 percent to 8.75 percent.

Recent estimates from the City's 10-Year Road and Drainage Repairs Plan, which was adopted by the City Council on July 17, peg the total cost of raising the condition of Orinda's entire public road system from poor to good condition at \$52 million. That system currently consists of 92.5 miles of arterials, collectors, school routes and non-private residential roads. The City's total budget each year is roughly \$10 million.

If the measure passes, the increased sales tax would generate an estimated \$540,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2013.

Those revenues have been projected by City leaders to then increase to \$709,000 by the time the tax sunsets in FY 2022 - meaning that the total take for the City over the life of the tax increase would be roughly \$6.7 million.

City leaders have planned, in tandem, to increase the amount the government dedicates - from roughly \$878,000 in FY 2013 to \$1,019,000 by FY 2024 - or a total of \$11.4 million over the life of the roads and drains plan.

Future phases of the long-term funding plan call for the City to put forward additional bond or parcel tax measures for voter approval; the first would be in FY 2017.

According to the analysis written by Orinda City Attorney Osa L. Wolff for the Measure L Voter Information Pamphlet, "The proposed one-half cent (0.5 percent) sales tax would be levied in addition to and in the same manner as the other legally authorized sales taxes currently collected in Orinda... Retailers collect sales taxes at the time of sale and remit the funds to the State Board of Equalization, which administers such taxes and allocates the proceeds between the State and various local governmental entities, including the City of Orinda, based on applicable legal mandates. All proceeds from the sales tax proposed by [Measure L] would be allocated to the City of Orinda."

Wolff added that Orinda's proposed one-half cent sales tax increase has been structured as a general tax, which "means that all proceeds would be deposited in the City's General Fund and could be used by the City for any municipal government purpose...The Measure does not bind the City to use the proceeds from the proposed sales tax for any particular services, facilities, or programs."

Residents opposed to the measure have cited concerns about how future City Councils might spend the funds, the impacts of the additional tax on seniors living on fixed incomes, and whether a higher sales tax in Orinda may send shoppers to nearby Lafayette.

Because it has been structured as a general tax measure, Measure L only needs a simple majority to succeed come November - unlike prior unsuccessful ballot measures attempted by the City which required a two-thirds approval by voters for passage.

Moragans will also be voting on whether to raise their town's sales tax rate (Measure K). Proposition 30, which is being promoted by California Governor Jerry Brown to generate statewide funding for public schools and public safety, could add an additional temporary one-quarter cent to the overall sales tax rate.

The Ballot Language:

Measure L - Orinda City Services and Infrastructure Measure

To help protect and maintain city services, including repairing failing roads, fixing potholes, improving traffic safety on local streets, fixing drains, and providing for other city services, shall the City of Orinda enact a one-half cent sales tax, for 10 years, with financial audits, public review of all expenditures, and a citizens' oversight commission?

Reach the reporter at: laurie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA