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## Two Parcel Taxes Likely on May Ballot Local schools looking for an extension of existing measures

By *Cathy Tyson*

The Acalanes Union High School District and the Lafayette School District are making plans to put measures on the May, 2014 ballot to extend existing parcel taxes that will sunset next year. Voters in Moraga, Orinda, Lafayette and parts of Walnut Creek will vote on the high school district measure, while only Lafayette voters will make a decision for the Lafayette School District.

Back in 2010 voters in the AUHSD, which includes Campolindo, Miramonte, Acalanes, Las Lomas and the Acalanes Center for Independent Study, approved Measure A for \$112 per parcel to raise money to avoid the loss of science, foreign language, English, social studies, arts, and mathematics classes due to cuts in the state budget. Measure A, also known as the "Emergency Education Act" collected this fee per parcel for five years starting in 2010, resulting in approximately \$3.9 million in annual funding since the 2010-2011 school year, according to the district.

The initial results are in from a feasibility study completed by True North Research on behalf of the high school district; officials say the results look promising. More complete results are expected in the near future.

If the measure isn't approved, the district will have to lay off teachers and classified staff according to Tom Mulvaney, AUHSD board member. "It's key that we keep our teachers," he explained, adding, "We have a very serious responsibility; we're going to have to do something."

Board members called for an additional special meeting to review the measure and finalize ballot language before the Feb. 5 deadline.

Only Lafayette voters will likely have a second parcel tax measure, if approved, on the May ballot - this one for the Lafayette School District comprised of four elementary schools and Stanley Middle School. Not one, but two existing parcel taxes are expiring; the district would combine both to form one measure.

Voters approved the Measure J parcel tax in 2007 for \$313 per parcel that includes a 3 percent annual adjustment for inflation - this measure sunsets in 2015. In addition, voters approved Measure B in 2011 for \$176 per parcel that also expires in 2015. Currently these two taxes contribute roughly 15 percent of the annual budget, almost \$5 million dollars.

Decisions about whether to place a measure on the ballot, along with the timing and structure, will be finalized at a special meeting of the Lafayette School District on Jan. 30, according to Teresa Gerringer, president of the school board.

Rachel Zinn, superintendent of the Lafayette School District, called passage of the parcel tax "critical."

Both the Acalanes Union High School District and Lafayette School District measures would need to garner at least two-thirds of the vote to pass.

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