

Letters to the Editor

County Sales Tax Will Hurt Residents

Dear Editor:

A Contra Costa County sales-tax increase will bring harm to county residents.

County supervisors have placed a sales-tax hike on the November 2016 ballot (Lamorinda Weekly, July 27.) The proceeds from the proposed tax increase are to be used for transportation.

The proposed tax hike, if passed, will raise the county's sales by one-half percentage point. For example, in Orinda, where the current sales tax is 9.0 percent, the new sales tax would be 9.5 percent.

In 2012 in Orinda, the sales tax was 8.25 percent. This means that the tax on a \$50,000 automobile in 2012 was \$4,125.

If the new 9.5 percent sales tax takes place in 2017, that \$50,000 automobile will have a tax of \$4,750.

A tax going from \$4,125 to \$4,750 is a 15.2 percent increase.

Contra Costa County residents already pay a one-half percentage point sales tax for BART. In addition, part of a homeowner's property tax goes for BART. Worse, in November 2016, there will be a measure on the ballot for a \$3.5 billion bond for BART. If the BART bond measure passes, property taxes will be increased over a 30-year period.

Eliminating these BART taxes — really subsidies — becomes essential if the countywide sales tax goes up.

Raising the countywide sales tax by one-half percentage point is an attack on low-income people and retired individuals living on fixed incomes. In 2016, recipients of Social Security received no raise, making a higher sales tax even more burdensome.

The proposed countywide sales-tax increase will raise prices for goods. The more something costs, the less people buy. If people buy fewer items, workers (like those in car dealerships) will get lower pay or lose their jobs (or both). Moreover, shoppers may buy more merchandise online, where — for many purchases — there is no sales tax.

Economic harm, especially in the area of employment, will be the result if the county sales tax is raised.

In November, voters in Contra Costa County should soundly reject any increase in the sales tax.

Richard S. Colman
Orinda

Join Measure C Oversight Committee

Dear Editor,

Lafayette's schools are overdue for improvements. Fortunately, voters wisely passed Measure C, the Lafayette School District bond, with a 73 percent vote. Now we have an opportunity to improve our schools. This is good news; important first steps have been accomplished. However, the hardest step still remains: how to manage the funds? Over \$70 million dollars will be at our disposal. How should it be spent? Who can we count on to ensure it is spent wisely?

I'm a Burton Valley Elementary dad with two sons in the district. I care about the quality of education our children receive. We need this bond to work for everyone.

I'm also a capital asset manager, engineer, and member of Lafayette's Capital Projects Assessments Committee. I know from experience that we're going to have to overcome challenges to ensure the best for our kids.

The district will have to weigh projects, and prioritize the best ones. "X-factors" like design constraints, changing costs and complicated scheduling will lead to trade-offs and tough decisions.

Over the last year, I have attended many school board meetings. I commend the board for their efforts to pass Measure C.

Now the board has to shift to the nitty-gritty of execution. The first step was to hire consultants to manage the bond and coordinate construction. Who will manage these consultants?

The board will need to be mindful that poorly thought-out designs, cost overruns, and blown schedules will lead to reduced value. We must manage our consultants and seek out input from students, teachers, parents, administrators, and the community. We'll be paying for this bond for 50 years. We better make sure that we're getting the best "bang for our buck."

I hope that all my neighbors who have an interest in fighting for our students — or maximizing our tax dollars — will strongly consider joining the Measure C Citizens' Oversight Committee. The more perspectives, the more expertise, the better. If you're not ready to dive that deep, at least let the school board know what you think.

Get out there. Make your voice heard. I know I will.
Mark Kindhouse
Lafayette



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Niman Flat Iron Steak: potato gratin, green beans, chimichurri sauce18
Fresh Seafood Cioppino: in a rich tomato-basil sauce, parmesan, garlic toast ..19
Roasted Scallops: spinach, saliccia sugo19
Roasted Wild Salmon: white wine, capers, braised greens, and potato gratin..17
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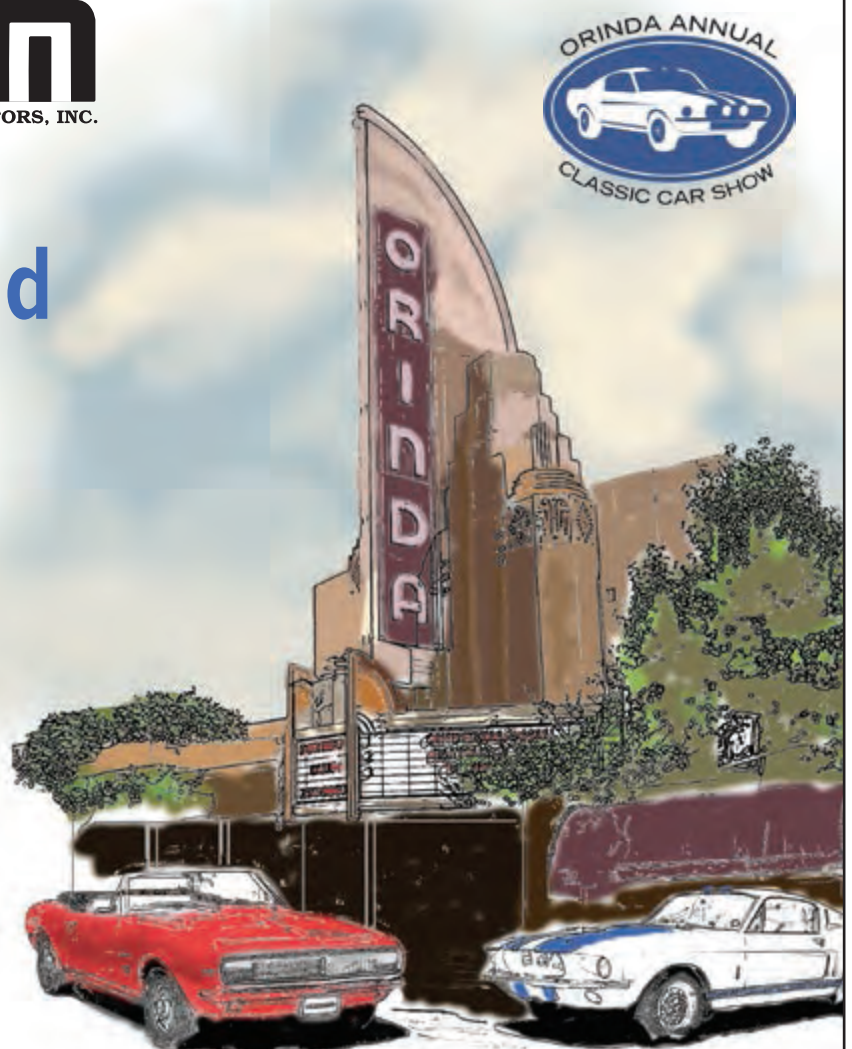
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