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No parcel tax on June ballot

By Pippa Fisher

The Lafayette School Board decided at their Feb. 21 meeting not to move forward with the parcel tax measure on the June 2018 ballot following a 4 to 1 vote against it.

School Board President Teresa Gerringer says, "While there is unanimous agreement about the need to identify a sustainable, long-term funding source, there was not a clear path to success for a measure that would adequately bridge the gap in state funding."

LAFSD Schools Superintendent Rachel Zinn said in a letter to the community that the vote came after a lengthy and thoughtful discussion about running such a measure.

Zinn points to the high degree of uncertainty that exists including the "unknowns of the new federal tax law, the election of a new governor, the selection of a new superintendent, and changes to the current Lafayette School Board with four seats up for election in November."

Formal polling conducted at the end of last year showed a high degree of community support for the schools but Zinn says the amount that was favorable to voters was not sufficient to balance the budget. She says that, thanks to a small allocation of one-time monies and gap funding that districts will receive from the state in 2018-19, the district will be granted a reprieve for one year giving the board time for consideration of a future parcel tax measure.

Zinn says that the need to close a substantial funding gap isn't going away.

"Even with slight increases allocated to school districts as part of Gov. Brown's January budget, the Lafayette School District will need to continue to identify sustainable ways to significantly enhance revenues," she says, adding that strong advocacy at the state level is needed if the funding model is to change and adequate funding for districts like Lafayette is made a priority.

Zinn says that money raised by Lafayette Partners in Education becomes even more critical at this time.

"I cannot emphasize how important it is to build a base of understanding about the district's budget and the challenges we face, all which could require us to have to make difficult decisions as we work to maintain our outstanding educational programs," says Zinn. She encourages people to contact her for additional information. Budget information can also be found on the district website.

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