



Published June 13th, 2018

Orinda Library Bond passes easily

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda voters approved by almost 72 percent Measure J, which increases the existing parcel tax to continue funding for the Orinda Library. The total "yes" vote was 2,500, while the "no" vote was only 986, or 28.28 percent of the 3,486 total votes cast. The yes votes exceeded the two-thirds vote required for a tax measure. Last February the city council unanimously agreed to a compromise on the parcel tax to put a straight \$30 per year increase on the ballot, but without automatic hikes to keep up with inflation, which had been considered but fared badly in a public opinion poll.

The vote brings the library parcel tax up to \$69 per year for each property subject to the tax. At that level, the library is expected to be able to continue to maintain the 17-year-old library building for another seven years before having to go back and ask the public for another increase. With the increase, the library will continue to provide the extended hours currently enjoyed by Orindans. Without it, hours would have had to be cut. Contra Costa County only funds 35 hours per week; the additional 25 hours per week that the library remains open are funded by the parcel tax.

The calculations for the tax were based on the assumption that operating expenses will increase by 3 percent and utility costs will increase by 4 percent annually. A maintenance reserve funded at a level of \$100,000 per year was also counted.

Library Manager Sierra Campagna was very happy with the vote. "I'm really pleased that the Orinda Library will continue to stay open seven days a week and be able to provide the same level of service to the community," she said. "It's so important for everyone in our community to feel that there is a place where they can enjoy free cultural and educational programs and have a safe and pleasant space for doing work, reading, exploring new ideas and studying. It feels great to know that Orinda residents value the resources that the library provides."

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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