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Town council officially endorses Measure M

By Vera Kochan



Photo Andy Scheck

At the Jan. 22 Moraga Town Council meeting, the council members unanimously adopted a resolution supporting the renewal of the \$192 parcel tax benefiting the Moraga School District through the upcoming Measure M.

In November 2013, Measure M's predecessor, Measure B, was approved by voters for a six-year window assigning a \$192 parcel tax to homeowners with an exemption for low-income residents over 65 years old. Measure B generated approximately \$1 million annually for the MSD and was approved by 68.36% of Moraga voters.

The tax is set to expire in June, and the MSD established a Fiscal Advisory Committee of stakeholders during the 2018-19 school year, to determine the ramifications resulting in the loss of Measure B funds. The FAC independently reviewed the impending financial picture

and recommended expenditure reductions along with efforts to maintain the high level of education Moraga residents have come to expect. While MSD has made efforts to cut costs it cannot overcome a rising deficit. The FAC's recommendation for the MSD was to seek a renewal of the \$192 parcel tax through Measure M.

In November, the MSD board approved a resolution for the March ballot with the following language: "To maintain high quality elementary/intermediate schools, shall Moraga School District continue funding to support effective science, technology, engineering, math, arts and music programs; maintain manageable class sizes; keep schools safe; and attract and retain the best qualified teachers; by adopting a measure renewing funding at the current \$192 rate per parcel, providing \$1 million annually, until repealed by voters, with low-income senior exemptions, cost of living adjustments and independent oversight with all funds supporting Moraga students?"

The Jan. 22 town council meeting attracted approximately 15 residents all urging council members to endorse Measure M. Among them was MSD Superintendent Bruce Burns who stated, "Moraga School District was recently recognized by the California Department of Education as having the highest performing elementary school district in Contra Costa County and received the highest possible score on every academic metric."

Representatives from Strong Schools For Moraga explained that all funding directly benefits Moraga schools and cannot be used for administrators' salaries. Additionally, citizens' oversight and annual public audits would be required.

Concerned parents stressed that Moraga's schools are why they chose to move into town and that good schools help to keep property values high.

After the council's announced unanimous support for Measure M, a hearty applause rang throughout the audience.

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