



V LAFAYETTE VISTAS

Published by the City of Lafayette

Fall 2016 Vol. 26, No.4

COUNCIL PLACES SALES TAX “MEASURE C” ON BALLOT

Lafayette is a remarkable place to live. The City’s natural setting – nestled among spacious regional parks, oak woodlands, and open spaces – is spectacular. The weather is darned-near perfect. Our public schools are outstanding. And, while just minutes from one of the most dynamic cities in the world, we enjoy a certain tranquility. The City has a low crime rate, our roads are in good shape, and the City’s budget has been in surplus for twenty consecutive years.

During the last two years, the City Council has convened a series of neighborhood community conversations and surveys to hear from people regarding their vision for Lafayette over the next twenty years. In those forums, residents said that they want – and are willing to pay for – more open space, better downtown parking solutions, smoother traffic flow, enhanced police resources, new downtown parks, and a revitalized Park Theater.

These improvements cost money and current revenues are insufficient to fund them all. And so, last July, the City Council decided to place a sales tax measure on the November ballot.

Measure C, if approved by a majority of voters, will enact an additional one percent sales tax for twenty-nine years. City staff estimates that the new tax will generate about \$3M annually to be used exclusively within Lafayette.

What Will the Money Be Used For?

While the funds can be used for any general governmental purpose, the Lafayette City Council has identified the following projects as City priorities:

- Protecting open space from development
- Reducing downtown congestion
- Enhancing police protection
- Improving downtown parking
- Acquiring land for downtown parks
- Revitalizing the historic Park Theater

The tax proceeds will also be used to capture matching funds, grants, and private donations that might not otherwise be available without the additional funding leverage.

Sales Tax Rates Vary Widely

According to the State’s Legislative Analyst, while the range spans from 7.5% to 10%, the average sales tax rate in California is about 8.5 percent. Meanwhile, the current retail sales tax rate in Lafayette is also 8.5%. Just 1%, however, of that 8.5% is returned to the City, with the rest going to the State and various other agencies.

In 2003, Governor Gray Davis approved California Senate Bill SB566 which, if approved by local voters, allows new

tax increments to be added to the combined state and local sales and use tax rate. Since then, many communities have used this tool to establish a new revenue stream that flows directly to local programs. At last count, about 143 California cities now have voter approved transactions and use tax rates. Locally, ten of the nineteen cities in Contra Costa County have add-on sales taxes (see map).

Four years ago, in 2012, voters in both Orinda and Moraga approved new sales tax increments to help pay for

projects in those neighboring cities. Sales tax rates in those cities are, therefore, higher than in Lafayette.

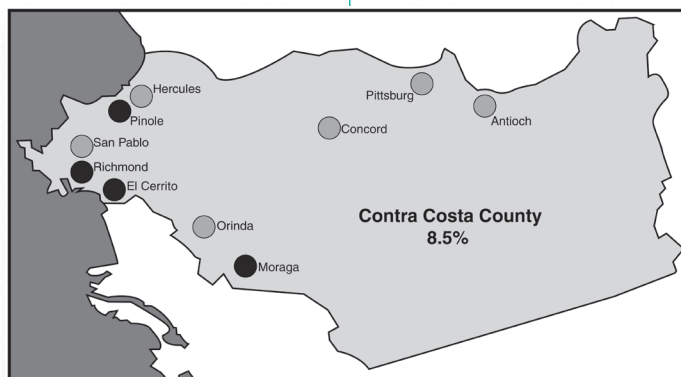
If Measure C passes, Lafayette’s increased sales tax rate will be paid by the many residents from neighboring communities who shop and dine in Lafayette, just as we now pay higher Orinda and Moraga sales tax rates when we shop there.

Is There a Limit to These New Sales Taxes?

Yes. While Senate Bill 566 gave cities the option to add sales tax increments, it also added limits. In Contra Costa County, the maximum sales tax rate for any jurisdiction may not exceed 2.5 percent above the base 7.5% State rate – so the maximum possible rate is 10%. While this limit would not impede Measure C, it could impact future local sales taxes.

Here’s how. If Lafayette voters choose not to approve Measure C now and, in subsequent elections, county-wide agencies such as BART or the local transportation authority are successful with their own county-wide add-on sales tax measures, those other agencies’ new tax rates could increase the sales tax rate up to 10% and thus entirely “use up” Lafayette’s headroom under SB 566’s tax cap.

(continued on page 2)



Contra Costa Cities with Add-On Sales Tax Rates

● 9.00 - 9.25% ● 9.50 - 10.00%

As of May, 2015
Source: California Legislative Analyst

Sales Tax “Measure C” on Ballot *(continued from front page)*

In such a case, the higher sales tax increment paid at local stores would go for County-wide purposes instead of remaining in Lafayette. Going forward, Lafayette would be prohibited from seeking a higher sales tax rate for itself absent the sunset of an existing tax measure or enactment of special State legislation.

What About Oversight?

The measure requires that a citizens’ advisory committee be established to review the use of the funds by the City Council, and it is the City’s practice to require annual independent audits of all revenues and expenditures. In addition, all Measure C proceeds will be placed in a specific fund within the City’s budget that

TEXT OF MEASURE C

This is what will be on your ballot.

To provide funding that will stay 100% in Lafayette, to maintain the City’s quality of life by funding general City services prioritizing:

- Protecting open space;
- Reducing downtown congestion;
- Enhancing police protection;
- Increasing downtown parking;
- Acquiring land for downtown parks;
- Revitalizing the historic Park theater;

shall the ordinance enacting a general 1% sales tax, for 29 years, providing \$3 million dollars annually, with citizens’ oversight, all funds spent in Lafayette, be adopted?

will make oversight and reporting transparent and easy to follow. And, just like it does every time the City spends taxpayer money, the Council will hold open meetings to discuss any and every proposed project or expenditure before making a final decision.

Lafayette is a great place to live, but the excellent quality of life here did not happen by accident. It’s the result of decades of planning, work, and strategic investment by volunteers, school board members, teachers, parents, non-profit organizations, visionary taxpayers and the City. Like your predecessors did before you, please take the time to study these issues carefully, and exercise your right to vote!

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) ABOUT MEASURE C

What is Measure C?

Measure C is a tax measure that, if approved, will provide funding for the maintenance and enhancement of Lafayette’s quality of life. Measure C asks voters to consider an additional 1% sales tax for a period of 29 years, providing \$3 million annually, and all of its proceeds will be used in Lafayette. A Citizen’s Oversight Committee will be established to monitor the measure’s revenues and expenditures.

Will the City borrow money against the new revenue stream?

If there are unique opportunities – such as the purchase of a rare piece of open space – that arise before the City has had time to accumulate significant funds, the City may choose to quickly issue a bond because, otherwise, the opportunity could be lost for good. In addition, bonding may allow the City to start on some projects right away so that people see tangible benefits of the tax sooner, without waiting 5 to 10 years.

How will Measure C revitalize the Park Theater?

At the City Council’s discretion, Measure C funds could be used to incentivize a non-profit or public/private partnership to renovate the Park Theater. Once it is refurbished, Measure C monies could fund the staging of community events and meetings at the refurbished Park Theater.

Are Measure C funds needed to build City offices?

No. While the City’s long-term Downtown Specific Plan does suggest that City offices should be relocated to Lafayette’s historic core, Measure C funds are not necessary for this purpose. The City is well-managed, both operationally and financially, and has for twenty years been accumulating money in a special fund for a permanent City office building. Lafayette currently has \$5M in notes and assets earmarked for City offices and does not require additional funding from Measure C.

Can’t the City protect open space by enforcing existing zoning codes and ordinances?

While Lafayette does have a strict Hillside Ordinance, the City cannot prohibit owners of private parcels from building on their property. Property owners do have certain development rights. A notable example is the gateway parcel across the street from the Oakwood athletic club. Many people do not realize that this 62 acre piece of open space, with its signature oak, is privately owned and not part of EBMUD’s reservoir property holdings – and that it is zoned for single-family housing.

Will the sales tax be used to pay higher salaries to employees?

No. Lafayette employee salaries are benchmarked every two years to nine peer cities, which ensures that employees are paid fairly – but not above market rates. Furthermore, Lafayette is only one of 10 cities in California that offers a defined contribution retirement plan rather than a defined benefit plan. That means no city employee receives a pension, that the City currently has no unfunded retirement debt, and that none of the sales tax will be used for that purpose.

JENNIFER RUSSELL RETIRES AFTER 37 YEARS WITH LAFAYETTE



Thirty seven years! In this day and age of job-hopping and transient lifestyles, who works that long for their employer anymore? Jennifer Russell does. Or, to be more accurate, Jennifer Russell DID. Until last month when, on September 30th, she finally called it quits.

Jennifer was the city's longest-tenured employee, by far, and for that fact alone she deserved special fêteing. But when hundreds of people gathered last month to honor her service in Lafayette, it wasn't just her time on the job they mentioned. They also cited her accomplishments, which are many.

Jennifer was hired as Lafayette's first ever Parks and Recreation employee in 1979, and was promoted to Parks & Recreation Director in 1983. She is the only Parks & Recreation Director this city has ever known, and in that position, Jennifer oversaw the acquisition

and conversion of the old Burton School into the City's first recreation center; managed the purchase and development of the 58-acre Lafayette Community Park; led the renovation of Buckeye Fields; and organized the purchase of Leigh Creekside Park.

Her programming instincts are the stuff of legend. Under Jennifer's leadership, Lafayette residents were introduced to all manners of awesome summer day camps, father-daughter dances, bunny brunches, haunted Halloween houses, teen dances, and open mic nights. The fun never stopped! On summer days, toddlers were delighted by jugglers, mimes, and contortionists, and as an alternative to traditional sports, Jennifer made room at the Community Center for Pétanque, Roller Hockey, and Bocce.

Behind the scenes, Jennifer managed many master plans that – while invisible to most people – ultimately shaped the park facilities that grace Lafayette today. She worked tirelessly alongside volunteers to blaze new trails – and we mean that literally – overseeing the develop-

ment of at least seven major wilderness pathways that snake through and around Lafayette's vast open spaces.

Jennifer did all this while managing a recreation program for the City of Lafayette that is – unlike many cities – self-sustaining. That's right: thanks to Jennifer and her parsimonious staff, Lafayette's recreation programs have not, for the last twenty years, required any public subsidy to cover their direct expenses.

When it's all said and done, during her decades with the City, Jennifer Russell proved herself to be fun and funny; a dedicated visionary; an exceptional agent and promoter of the public trust; and the living embodiment of parks, trails and recreation in Lafayette. For all those reasons and more, last year the City Council rightly named the new Jennifer Russell Building at the Lafayette Community Center in her honor.

And so it was only fitting that it was upon the patio of the new Jennifer Russell Building that the retirement party for Jennifer Russell was held. We wish her a long and healthy retirement.

JONATHAN “ACE” KATAYANAGI TO BE NEW PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION DIRECTOR

He's the *Face of Fun* in Lafayette; he's that great, enthusiastic guy who started with the city eighteen years ago as a part-time roller hockey referee; he made his mark as director of Camp Awesome, to which so many of our local families have sent their kids; he is the leader and mentor of the City's Youth Commission, which puts on the Haunted House, the basketball tournament, the teen dances, and so many more outstanding programs; he has served energetically for the last five years as the City's Recreation Supervisor; he's worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce; and otherwise been involved with just about every fun thing that has happened in Lafayette over the past decade. **Whew!**

And now Jonathan aka “Ace” Katayanagi has worked his way into the City's biggest fun job of them all: Director of Parks, Trails, and Recreation for Lafayette. Congratulations to Jonathan! Like the camp he has run for so many years, he'll be **AWESOME!**

If you have any questions for Jonathan, or if you just want to wish him well, he can be reached at jkatayanagi@lovelafayette.org, or 925-284-2232.



Hungry for Some Company? **Let's Do Lunch!**

Last month, twelve seniors who had never met each other gathered at Uncle Yu's for the inaugural “Let's Do Lunch” program. There was much laughter and discussion as they answered ice-breaker “Table Topics” questions scattered on the two tables. At the end of the afternoon, everybody was exchanging contact information and inviting one another to other senior gatherings, such as the Senior Services Reservoir Walking Group. It was a great opportunity to make connections and enjoy sharing meals together. Are you, too, looking for some friendly lunch company? Discover and explore the various dining experiences in the Lamorinda area. Relax, dine, meet new people, socialize and enjoy lively conversation! First Tuesday of every month, but space is limited! Contact Lafayette Senior Services for the schedule of restaurants and to make your reservations: **Seniors@LoveLafayette.org** or 284-5050. Individuals pay for their own lunches; the restaurants provide separate checks. This interest group is offered in conjunction with **Lamorinda Village**.



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FREE ADMISSION TO BAMPFA GALLERIES

*for Lafayette residents only on
Sunday, November 13th*

If you haven't been there yet, you really do owe yourself a visit to the new UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA). The \$112-million, 83,000-square-foot facility is the East Bay's best new art museum, and it's conveniently located in downtown Berkeley.

The building alone is worth seeing. Designed by architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro – this is the same team that renovated Lincoln Center and designed the High Line elevated walking park in New York City – the new BAMPFA wraps an undulating stainless steel theater around the back of an elegant 1939 printing plant. The result is a magnificent facility that both honors its history and feels strikingly modern at the same time. The new building serves as a stylish sentry for the transition from downtown onto the Cal campus.

Inside the building, the exhibits are impressive, supplied by more than 19,000 works of art from BAMPFA's permanent collection. This being Berkeley, the ever-changing gallery themes are notable for their innovation, intellectual exploration, and social commentary. And the theater is spectacular, with state of the art sound, 4K digital projection system, and the capacity to screen films in many legacy celluloid formats as well.



Best of all: You can see it for free! That's right: BAMPFA wants more Lafayette residents to visit so, for one day only, Museum Director Lawrence Rinder has agreed to waive the \$12 gallery entrance fee for Lafayette residents (access to films in the Osher Theater will be for the usual admission charge). The special day is Sunday, November 13th. All you'll need to do is show your driver's license at the museum entrance desk. This is the first time BAMPFA has made this offer to an entire city, so be sure to take advantage of it. Sign up as a BAMPFA member on that day and receive a one-time 10% discount!

BAMPFA is located at 2155 Center Street in Downtown Berkeley, just one block from the Downtown Berkeley BART station. More info at www.bampfa.org.

CITY DIRECTORY

For Council Members call: 284-1968

Council Members

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Messages to **all** Council Members:
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Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	299-3210
Tony Coe, City Engineer	299-3203
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning & Building Dir.	299-3206
Mike Moran, Public Works Dir.	299-3214
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	299-3259

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Hansen, Program Mgr. **299-3216**
or **299-3215**

Parks, Trails and Recreation 284-2232

Jonathan Katayanagi, Director

Senior Services 284-5050

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	911
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	284-5010
Police Business Office:	283-3680

Anonymous tipline, traffic enforcement, suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3230

Fax 284-3169

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