



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

November 3, 2021

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Adam Politzer, Interim Town Manager

SUBJECT: Authorize Interim Town Manager to Submit a Letter Supporting Extension of Measure “A” Quarter-Cent Sales Tax which supports parks, open space, and agricultural lands

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize Interim Town Manager to submit a letter supporting extension of Measure “A” Quarter-Cent Sales Tax which supports parks, open space, and agricultural lands across Marin County.

BACKGROUND

In 2012, Marin County voters approved a one-quarter of one percent sales tax (County Ordinance 3586) to support parks, open space, and agricultural lands across Marin¹. By law, funds raised by Measure A must be spent on parks and open space, farmland preservation, recreation in Marin’s nineteen cities and towns, and land acquisition. Measure A also funds \$100,000 annually in community grants, extending opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy parks and preserves through local non-profit organizations. With the authority to levy the tax imposed by Measure A expiring nine years from the operative date of its enabling ordinance, the Marin County Open Space District initiated an anonymous, 14-question community survey² to check-in with Marin residents and visitors between August 5 and October 15. The survey was intended to gauge awareness of facilities, services, and projects, funded by Measure A in the past, and identify funding priorities and needs for consideration by the County’s Parks & Open Space Commission and Board of Supervisors for potential changes to the existing Measure A Expenditure Plan and potential placement of a Measure A extension on the ballot in June, 2022.

DISCUSSION

Under item 6 of its October 26, 2021 public meeting³, the Fairfax Open Space Committee (FOSC) discussed the expiration of the existing measure and the process leading to a measure proposing extension of Measure A on the ballot next year. FOSC is: “responsible for the consideration of long-term planning of open space in and near Fairfax, for the generation of community support for the implementation of that program and for the fund raising necessary to implement the plan”.

¹ See <https://www.parks.marincounty.org/about-us/measure-a>

² http://marin.granicus.com/DocumentViewer.php?file=marin_9255e145851240aced53cb9c8e1d0d60.pdf

³ <https://www.townoffairfax.org/meetings/open-space-committee-meeting-october-26-2021/#/tab-agenda-packet>

FOOSC unanimously adopted the following motion during the course of that October 26, 2021 meeting:

That as soon as possible, the Town Council direct the Town Manager to provide written communication to MCOSD emphasizing that the Town and its Open Space Committee:

- Support an extension of Measure A.
- Recommend that at the least 15%, if not more, of the renewed Measure A funds should continue to be allocated to Towns and Cities, since local public entities can best represent the interest of its local residents.
- Recommend that Measure A should especially give priority to the following in this particular order:
 - 1) Land Acquisition,
 - 2) Biodiversity Protection, and
 - 3) Trail Maintenance & Improvement.

FOOSC also sent a letter to the Interim Town Manager on that topic which is included as Attachment A to this Staff Report. Copies of the October 19, 2021 Marin County Parks Staff Report to the County Board of Supervisors presenting the results of the Community Survey, and the referenced presentation itself (which includes a timeline forecast for many other opportunities for the public to provide input on potential changes to the Expenditure Plan and whether the extension is placed on the ballot) are included as Attachment B to this Staff Report.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact has been identified should Council direct Staff to take the action recommended herein.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Letter to Interim Town Manager from FOOSC
- B. October 19, 2021 Marin County Parks Staff Report to the County Board of Supervisors presenting the results of the Community Survey

Dear Adam Politzer,

Last night, at our meeting of October 25, 2021, FOSC discussed the efforts by Marin County Open Space District (MCOSD) to put on the ballot an extension of Measure A. This is because per the town regulation that created it, FOSC is: “responsible for the consideration of long term planning of open space in and near Fairfax, for the generation of community support for the implementation of that program and for the fund raising necessary to implement the plan”.

In connection with that, we learned that MCOSD issued a now-closed public survey related to public interest in extension of Measure A to determine priority objectives should such an extension be put before the voters.

To our knowledge, neither FOSC nor the Town has submitted its comments on the extension of Measure A or on the preferred priorities for use of those funds. With that background, FOSC unanimously adopted the following motion:

That **as soon as possible**, the Town Council direct the Town Manager to provide written communication to MCOSD emphasizing that the Town and its Open Space Committee:

- Support an extension of Measure A.
- Recommend that at the least 15%, if not more, of the renewed Measure A funds should continue to be allocated to Towns and Cities, since local public entities can best represent the interest of its local residents.
- Recommend that Measure A should especially give priority to the following in this particular order:
 - 1) Land Acquisition,
 - 2) Biodiversity Protection, and
 - 3) Trail Maintenance & Improvement,

We believe that these priorities, in this order, are of vital importance. This is because the ever-increasing and substantial pressure for development of unprotected open space areas in Marin is increasingly resulting in loss of plant and animal biodiversity, and, consequently, in lost opportunities for public recreation in harmony with nature.

It is expected that the County may consider the extension of Measure A before the Town’s December meeting. This means we must act now. We urgently ask that this item be considered and acted upon at the Town’s upcoming November meeting.

Sincerely, Susan Pascal Beran, Chair FOSC, on behalf of FOSC



MARIN COUNTY
PARKS
PRESERVATION RECREATION



OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
REGIONAL PARKS & PATHWAYS
COMMUNITY PARKS
LANDSCAPE SERVICES

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October 19, 2021

Honorable Board of Supervisors
Marin County Civic Center
San Rafael, CA 94903

SUBJECT: Presentation from Parks staff on the recently completed 2021 Community Survey which sought input from residents on their awareness of facilities, services, and projects as well as funding priorities for the department

Dear Supervisors:

RECOMMENDATION: Receive presentation from Parks staff

SUMMARY: In 2012 voters in Marin approved a one-quarter cent (1/4) sales tax measure, Measure A, to fund conservation, wildland fire fuel reduction and vegetation management, farmland preservation, deferred maintenance in parks, road and trail improvements in open space preserves, and projects that protect the natural beauty of Marin. That measure has a sunset date of March 31, 2022.

80% Support for a Potential Extension of Measure A

At the July 6, 2021 special meeting of the Board of Supervisors, your Board received a presentation on a poll conducted at the direction of the Marin Open Space Trust (MOST), gauging community interest in extending the sales tax measure that found over 80% support for extending the measure. At that meeting your Board directed staff to seek placement of a measure continuing the Parks Measure A sales tax on the June 7, 2022 election ballot.

Community Engagement

Prior to placing the measure on the ballot, Parks staff invited community members to share their feedback related to Measure A to inform any potential changes to the expenditure plan or ordinance. Parks staff developed an online survey that was open for nearly two months and over 2,700 community members participated. The survey gathered input on what expenditure areas were most important to participants as well as which expenditure areas should receive more, the same or less funding in a future extension of the measure. In addition, there were questions about the participants' demographics, preferred activities in parks, potential length of the extension and an open-ended question in which participants could add additional feedback. The results are detailed in Attachment A and will be presented to your Board today by Parks staff.

In addition to the survey, Parks Director Max Korten and Government and External Affairs Manager Kevin Wright also hosted office hours making themselves available to any community member or group that wished to meet and discuss their perspectives and feedback regarding Marin County Parks and Measure A. Over the course of two months, they met with over 40 individuals and community groups to gain in depth input and feedback. Notes from those meetings can be found in Attachment B.

Key Themes

Overall, both survey respondents as well as those that participated in office hours meetings echoed the support that MOST found in their survey for continuing the work that has been accomplished since the passage of the measure in 2012. There was an especially strong interest in wildfire prevention on Park and Open Space lands, maintenance and improvements of both park facilities and preserve roads and trails, as well as protecting biodiversity on our lands. These areas have been the focus of Marin County Parks work under this funding measure over the past 8½ years. Survey respondents and office hours meeting participants also highlighted areas where modest changes might be made in the expenditure plan including possibly adjusting the overall size of the farmland program, enabling the farmland program to support projects beyond purchasing agricultural easements, adjusting the size of the acquisition program, and emphasizing the importance of wildfire prevention on park and open space lands in the wildland urban interface.

Next Steps

Following this presentation, staff will develop a draft ordinance and expenditure plan that will be presented to the Parks and Open Space Commission in November and then to your Board in December for discussion. Staff will have an opportunity to make changes to the draft ordinance and expenditure plan and then return to the Parks and Open Space Commission in January 2022 for a formal recommendation to your Board. Then, in February 2022, staff will return to your Board for a first reading and public hearing seeking to place the measure on the June 7, 2022 ballot.

EQUITY IMPACT: The survey was available in English and Spanish and widely distributed through partners, social media, trailhead signs, local newspapers, the Marin County Parks website and more. However, it was not a random sampling of the population and participants tended to be older, less racially diverse, and more female than the population of Marin. To bring in voices that we missed, staff sought community leaders from groups that were underrepresented in the survey, to meet directly in office hour conversations. These conversations are detailed in the notes in Attachment B.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact related to today's presentation.

Please feel free to contact us should you have any questions or concerns.

REVIEWED BY: County Administrator N/A
 Department of Finance N/A
 County Counsel N/A
 Human Resources N/A

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Chamberlain
Assistant Director

ATTACHMENTS: Community Survey Results
 Office Hour Notes
 Copy of today's Presentation