

Mountain View council endorses Bay restoration tax

Measure AA would create Bay Area parcel tax to fund shoreline, water quality projects

The Mountain View City Council voted last week to endorse Measure AA, a proposed parcel tax designed to clean up the San Francisco Bay.

The measure on the June 7 ballot would levy a \$12-per parcel tax over the next 20 years throughout the nine-county Bay Area to fund Baylands restoration. If approved by voters, Measure AA is expected to raise a total of \$500 million that would be used to improve water quality, restore wildlife habitat and open up more of the shoreline to the public, according to advocates. But the measure faces a high hurdle by requiring support from two-thirds of voters to pass.

At the May 3 Mountain View City Council meeting, Mayor Pat Showalter asked her colleagues to endorse Measure AA. An outspoken advocate for improving water quality, Showalter sits on the governing board of the San Francisco Bay Restoration



A view of the Charleston Slough on Sept. 15, 2015. Measure AA on the June 7 ballot would create a new Bay Area parcel tax to fund shoreline and habitat restoration and water quality improvement projects. Photo by Michelle Le

Authority, the agency behind the measure. While the restoration authority already has some funding for this job, it isn't nearly enough, she said.

"This money is needed to do a better quality job and to do it much faster," Showalter said. "It's much better for leveraging funds for local and state grants."

Some members of the public criticized the city's endorsement, describing the measure as a handout to agencies already financed by taxpayers to address water quality. Saying he would oppose the measure, Councilman John Inks

described it as a "double dip" into taxpayers' pocketbooks. One public speaker alleged the Santa Clara Valley Water District was spending millions of dollars to help pass the measure, but there was no sign of this in the campaign-finance filings. The Yes on Measure AA has raised more than \$1.3 million as of its April 23 campaign statement, with large, six-figure donations coming from Facebook, Chevron, PG&E, The Nature Conservancy and the Save the Bay Fund.

According to the Mountain View's city attorney, Showalter does not have a conflict of interest in endorsing the measure, despite the fact that she works for Santa Clara Valley Water District. City Attorney Jannie Quinn said that the Political Reform Act specifically excluded government salaries from its potential conflicts for elected officials.

The council voted 6-1 to endorse Measure AA.

— *Bay City News Service*