

COUNTY OF MARIN MEASURE A

A **MEASURE A:** Marin County Emergency Communications and 911 Response Measure. To replace Marin County’s aging emergency communications system; reduce 911 response times; improve communications reliability during earthquakes, floods, fires, and other disasters; and ensure reliable communications among police, fire, and paramedic first responders throughout Marin County, shall an ordinance be adopted authorizing an annual parcel tax for 20 years based on land use, including \$29 per single-family home, with public audits, expenditure reports, citizen oversight and low-income senior exemptions?

YES

NO

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE A

Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA) is the backbone of Marin’s 911 emergency communications system, handling 4.4 million radio calls annually by Marin public safety agencies.

Our firefighters, paramedics, police and sheriffs all rely on MERA for 911. Whether it’s responding to a wildfire or flood, robbery or medical emergency, earthquake or other natural disaster, MERA’s system is vital for our public safety personnel to communicate and to do their jobs.

MERA was formed 16 years ago when 25 separate public organizations joined together to create our first unified countywide 911 network. The system linked Marin’s police, firefighters, paramedics, flood control, transit, public works and other public safety responders together on a single shared services platform.

The first generation of MERA’s 911 system vastly expanded the range of emergency response communication capabilities and provided full coordination between all member agencies. This shared services model has saved taxpayers money and improved safety.

But today, the 911 system has aged and is on the verge of becoming inoperable. The existing system is being used by nearly 400 more radios than the 2,500 it was designed to handle and almost twice as many as when we started. Original system vendors no longer support old equipment and software, and new federal laws will soon render the current network unusable.

The next generation system will address these challenges, plus make upgrades on existing equipment and software that will directly benefit residents by reducing response times, expanding coverage, increasing reliability and incorporating the latest technology.

MERA’s 25 members are asking Marin County residents to support this upgrade to our 911 emergency response system that we can rely on in a natural disaster or any other emergency.

Representing a broad coalition of emergency responders, civic and community leaders, we urge you to support this measure.

s/MARY JANE BURKE
Marin County Superintendent of Schools

s/ROBERT T. DOYLE
Marin County Sheriff

s/CHRISTOPHER GRAY
Fire Chief, San Rafael Fire Department

s/ALBERT J. BORO
Former Mayor of San Rafael

s/LARRY CHU
Vice Mayor, City of Larkspur

COUNTY COUNSEL’S IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS OF MEASURE A

COUNTY OF MARIN

SPECIAL PARCEL TAX MARIN EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS AND 911 RESPONSE

This measure was placed on the ballot by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marin.

This Measure, if approved by two-thirds of those voting thereon, would authorize the adoption of an ordinance approving a special parcel tax of \$29 per year per single family home, for a period of twenty (20) years, commencing with fiscal year 2015-16, to be used to replace Marin County’s aging emergency communications system; reduce 911 response times, improve communications reliability during earthquakes, floods, fires and other disasters; and ensure reliable communications among police, fire, and paramedic first responders throughout Marin County, with public audits, expenditure reports, citizen oversight and low-income senior exemptions for persons 65 years of age or older.

s/STEVEN M. WOODSIDE
County Counsel

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE A

CSPP supports this vitally important upgrade to the MERA system, but opposes the proposed parcel tax to finance it. Since before 2011, the 25 participating agencies have known that this upgrade to our vital, core emergency communications service would be necessary and should have taken steps then to start funding it. For example, San Rafael recently approved the purchase of a new fire truck and equipment costing over a million dollars. No new tax was necessary as San Rafael paid for the truck using its fire department's vehicle replacement fund. There is still time to start setting funds aside as system build out won't begin until June 2017. Finally, the new federal laws referred to in the Argument for Measure A that "will soon render the current network unusable" will not take effect until 2021. (See the brochure MERA mailed us weeks ago). Vote NO on Measure A.

s/RICHARD G. TAIT
Core Member CSPP
www.marincountypensions.com

ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE A

Marin County Emergency Communications and 911 Response Measure

Citizens for Sustainable Pension Plans (CSPP), a nonpartisan group of Marin residents, strongly opposes the MERA Parcel Tax. It represents the latest evidence of fiscal irresponsibility by Marin officials. While we agree that MERA's Next Generation Radio System is needed, we also believe that proposing a parcel tax to finance increased operating and maintenance plus \$40 million in project capital costs is a troubling decision.

This parcel tax would be the latest in a series of a la carte taxes that have become popular with Marin officials. These officials are using parcel taxes, sales taxes and higher user fees to fund essential, core government services that can no longer be afforded within existing budgets due to rising and unsustainable retiree pension and health care costs.

Over a billion dollars in unfunded retiree benefits are eating up available tax revenues that should fund core services. Instead of fixing the problem, officials are proposing new taxes to prop up Marin's broken retirement systems.

This proposed parcel tax would fund a 20-year bond yet the life expectancy for the fixed core equipment of the new system is 15 years. This would be an expensive replay as taxpayers still owe on our existing system and are being asked to fund a new one.

If the Parcel tax is not passed, the NexGen System will still be implemented, but with higher costs to the 25 public agencies that make up MERA. The operation, maintenance and project capital costs are estimated to increase the required contribution among MERA agencies from \$2.3 to \$4.4 million annually.

CSPP urges a NO vote. Marin officials must become fiscally responsible. Approving this only enables their current irresponsibility to continue.

s/RICHARD G. TAIT
Core Member CSPP
www.marincountypensions.com

**REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST
MEASURE A**

We all agree MERA’s 911 communication system is essential, but opposing Measure A as a means to coerce pension reform is misguided. Much has already been done regarding unfunded pension liability, but it is an unrelated obligation that requires State legislation to be fully realized.

Measure A funds Marin’s Emergency Communications and 911 Response Project and ensures all our first responders communicate on the same system countywide. However, if Measure A fails, some member agencies may opt out of the network increasing the costs for taxpayers and eliminating the primary benefit of MERA which is inter-agency communication during an emergency or disaster.

Measure A will only be used to pay upfront capital costs associated with upgrading 911 communications. Local agencies will continue to pay for annual operations and maintenance costs. The old equipment will remain in use during the 3-4 year construction period and will be paid off by 2020. Retirement of Measure A debt coincides with the new equipment’s expected life.

Passing Measure A is the most fiscally responsible option. It preserves the 25-agency network and upgrades our 911 system at the lowest possible cost. The Measure also mandates a Citizen’s Oversight Committee to scrutinize project spending, plus an exemption for low-income seniors.

The \$29 per home is a small price to pay to keep our “911” system working. Please decide as if your life might depend on it – because some day, it could. Vote “yes” on Measure A.

s/GARY PHILLIPS

Mayor of San Rafael, CPA

s/DAVID KIMBALL

Bolinas Fire Protection District Board Member

s/TODD CUSIMANO

Chief of Police, Central Marin Police Authority

s/ROBERT SINNOTT

Fire Chief, Larkspur Fire Department

Executive Officer, Ross Valley Paramedic Authority

s/MARK BASON-MITCHELL, M.D.

Fire Department Medical Director

MGH Trauma & Emergency Physician

Educator

**FULL TEXT OF MEASURE A
MARIN COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS AND 911 RESPONSE MEASURE
AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNTY OF MARIN
TO AUTHORIZE THE LEVY OF A SPECIAL
PARCEL TAX TO FINANCE PUBLIC
SAFETY SERVICES**

**THE PEOPLE OF COUNTY OF MARIN DO
HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. Authority, Purpose and Intent.

Pursuant to the authority of Section 53978 of the California Government Code, and other applicable law, there is hereby levied and assessed a special parcel tax by the County of Marin on all parcels of real property in the County for each fiscal year. It is the sole purpose and intent of this ordinance to impose a special parcel tax for fire protection and prevention services and for police protection services, including but not limited to obtaining, furnishing, operating, and maintaining a public safety and emergency radio communication system in cooperation with the Marin Emergency Radio Authority.

Section 2. Special Parcel Tax Imposed.

A special parcel tax for the purpose specified in Section 3 of this ordinance shall be imposed on all parcels of real property in the County of Marin for each fiscal year, commencing with fiscal year 2015-16. The maximum amount of the special parcel tax for each fiscal year shall be as follows:

Land Use Category	Maximum Amount of Tax
Single Family Residential	\$29.00 per parcel
Multi Family Residential	\$26.10 per unit
Agricultural	
5 acres or less	\$29.00 per parcel
Greater than 5 acres	\$58.00 per parcel
Commercial, Industrial and Utility	
½ acre or less	\$87.00 per parcel
Greater than ½ acre, up to and including 1 acre	\$174.00 per parcel
Greater than 1 acre	\$174.00 per parcel plus \$29.00 per acre for each acre or portion of acre above 1 acre, not to exceed \$2,500 per parcel

The records of the Marin County Assessor as of July 1st of each year shall provide the basis for determining the use and improvement of each parcel for the calculation of the special parcel tax applicable to that parcel in the following fiscal year, with such corrections as deemed necessary to reflect the actual use and improvement of any parcel.

For the purposes of this ordinance, the term “parcel” shall mean a parcel of real property having a separate assessor’s parcel number as shown on the last equalized assessment roll of Marin County.

Section 3. Special Fund, Use of Tax Proceeds.

The proceeds of the special tax imposed by this ordinance shall be placed in a special fund to be used solely for the purpose of providing fire protection and prevention services and police protection services. Specifically, all proceeds from the parcel tax will be provided to MERA solely for the Next Generation system project.

Section 4. Collection.

The special parcel tax imposed by this ordinance shall be collected in the same manner, on the same dates, and shall be subject to the same penalties and interest as other charges and taxes fixed and collected by and for the County of Marin, or in such other manner as may be prescribed by the Board of Supervisors.

The special parcel tax, together with all penalties and interest thereon, shall constitute a lien upon the parcel upon which it is levied until it has been paid, and said special parcel tax, together with all penalties and interest thereon, shall constitute until paid, to the extent authorized by law, a personal obligation to the County of Marin by the persons who own the parcel on the date the tax is due.

Section 5. Amendment and Implementation.

The Board of Supervisors shall be empowered to amend this ordinance by an affirmative vote of at least a majority of its members to carry out the general purposes of this ordinance, to conform the provisions of this ordinance to applicable state law, to modify the methods of collection, or to assign the duties of public officials under this ordinance.

In no event shall the Board of Supervisors amend this ordinance to increase the maximum amount of the special parcel tax established in Section 2 of this ordinance, unless approved by two-thirds of the voters voting thereon.

The Board of Supervisors by resolution may adopt procedures or definitions for the implementation or administration of the special parcel tax, including but not limited to qualifications for the exemption for low-income persons 65 years of age or older.

Section 6. Low-Income Senior and Other Exemptions.

The special parcel tax shall not be imposed upon any parcel that is exempt from the special parcel tax pursuant to any provision of the United States Constitution, California Constitution, California State law, or any paramount law, or upon any parcel for which the owner qualifies for an exemption for low-income persons 65 years of age or older. The Board of Supervisors by resolution may adopt additional exemptions to the special parcel tax imposed by this ordinance.

Section 7. Annual Report.

The chief fiscal officer of the County shall annually file with the County Board of Supervisors a report regarding the amount of special parcel tax revenues collected and expended and the status of any project authorized to be funded with the special parcel tax revenues, as required by California Government Code Section 50075.3, as such law is amended from time to time.

Section 8. Independent Compliance Audit.

By no later than December 31 of each year, commencing with December 31, 2016, independent auditors shall review whether the tax revenues collected pursuant to this ordinance are collected, managed and expended in accordance with the requirements of this ordinance.

Section 9. Citizen Oversight Committee.

By no later than June 30, 2015, the Governing Board of the Marin Emergency Radio Authority shall establish a committee to review the expenditure of revenues collected pursuant to this ordinance. The committee shall consist of at least five members appointed by the Governing Board of the Marin Emergency Radio Authority. The committee members shall be residents and taxpayers in the County of Marin. The terms of the Committee members and their specific duties shall be established by resolution of the Governing Board of the Marin Emergency Radio Authority.

Section 10. Term of Provisions, Sunset.

This ordinance shall be null and void as of twelve o'clock midnight, June 30, 2035, and shall have no force and effect whatsoever after said time and date. Notwithstanding the previous sentence, Section 4 relating to the collection and enforcement of liens or obligations for the special parcel tax previously levied hereunder, shall continue in effect until such time as the collection and enforcement procedures have been completed.

Section 11. Severability.

If any provision of this ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect any other provision or applications, and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are declared to be severable. The Board of Supervisors, and the electorate by referendum, do hereby declare that they would have adopted this ordinance and each section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, part or portion thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, clauses, phrases, parts or portions thereof, be declared invalid or unconstitutional.

Section 12. Effective Date.

This ordinance shall be adopted and become effective only if approved by two-thirds of the voters voting thereon, at an election to be held on November 4, 2014.

Section 13. Attestation.

The President is hereby authorized to attest to the adoption of this ordinance by signing where indicated below.

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance was PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the people of the Marin County voting on the 4th day of November, 2014.

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
ATTEST:
CLERK