July 12, 2022

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

SUBJECT: MARIN COUNTY FREE LIBRARY RENEWAL OF PARCEL TAX MEASURE

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION:
1. Provide policy direction concerning recommendation to renew and increase Proposed Library Parcel Tax.
2. Schedule consideration of resolution for July 19 to place measure on the November 8, 2022 General Election ballot.

SUMMARY

Background
In June 2014, voters in the Marin County Free Library District renewed the library parcel tax for nine years with 78.53% voter approval. The measure assessed a $49 per parcel special tax on parcels located in the district beginning in the 2015-2016 fiscal year and continuing through fiscal year 2023-2024 (expiring June 30, 2024). The parcel tax included an annual CPI adjustment, not to exceed 3% annually.

The parcel tax provides critical funding to: update local libraries; prevent library closures; maintain library hours; provide children, teen, senior and disabled programs including public education support; maintain books and digital collections; enhance library facilities and ADA accessibility; and ensure local funding can’t be taken by the State. Marin County Free Library voters previously adopted this special tax for library services in fiscal year 2010-2011, expiring in 2014-2015 but renewed beginning 2015-16.

In March 2022, the Library provided an update to the Board of Supervisors at the FY 2022-24 March Budget Workshops. The information shared with the Board included a summary of the 2021-2022 Community Survey, which netted approximately 5,000 responses in English and Spanish. Fully 89.7% of respondents felt the Marin County Free Library was meeting the needs of the
community. Respondents also expressed five key areas of improvement for the Marin County Free Library system:

1. More online resources, eBooks, and print books in general. Library patrons mentioned long wait times for popular items
2. More library hours
3. Additional programs for older adults and adults
4. Improved facilities
5. More staff for services

Support for a Potential Increase and Extension of Library Parcel Tax
The Friends of the Marin County Free Library and Marin County Library Foundation worked with Godbe Research in February 2022 to conduct a poll with likely voters on the feasibility of a renewal of the existing parcel tax. The poll tested a number of variables for the renewal of the parcel tax and, overall, 79.2% reported overwhelming satisfaction with the current provision of library services.

The poll tested the following with voters to gauge their support for a library parcel tax measure:

- To provide critical funding that can’t be taken by the State
- To maintain library hours and 24/7 online access
- To enhance programs for children, teens, adults, and seniors
- To provide free internet access and computers
- To upgrade library facilities

The voter poll resulted in three options for renewal of the parcel tax:

1. Option 1 - A renewal of the current parcel tax with CPI adjustment
2. Option 2 - An increase to $98.00 per parcel with annual CPI adjustment, for 9 years (Recommended)
3. Option 3 - An increase to $98.00 per parcel with annual CPI adjustment per parcel until ended by voters

We recommend Option 2 to enhance library services and facilities over the next nine years.

While all three options polled extremely high in support, Option 2 allows necessary resources to better address the areas of improvement identified by voters while also giving us a specific length of time to demonstrate the benefits of the additional investment in our services and facilities.
Proposed draft ballot language would appear as follows:

*To provide critical funding, that can’t be taken by the State, to: maintain library hours and 24/7 online library access; enhance programs for children, teens, adults, and seniors; increase book/digital collections; provide free internet access and computers; and upgrade library facilities; shall the Marin County Free Library measure be adopted increasing the currently approved library parcel tax to $98 a year, providing $4,700,000 annually, for 9 years, with annual adjustments, independent citizen oversight and senior citizen exemptions?*

The library system has significant unmet deferred maintenance needs to adequately maintain existing facilities. The increase of the parcel tax measure would allow the Marin County Free Library to complete needed maintenance and continue to upgrade library facilities to meet the changing needs of residents. Marin facility upgrades are needed for technology and Wi-Fi access; developmentally appropriate spaces for children and youth; and appropriate seating for older adults and ADA accessible spaces.

In addition, the 2021-2022 Community Survey outlines several key areas of improvements requested by respondents. The Marin County Free Library is committed to meeting these needs. With additional funding, Marin County Free Library could establish new services and programs for residents in existing areas, as well as support residents in the unincorporated areas of the county with additional outreach and mobile services. The Marin County Free Library could also meet the digital and print collection demands county-wide.

**Next Steps**

If your Board approves our recommendation today, staff will return on July 19 for a final hearing and a resolution to place the measure on the November 8, 2022 General Election ballot.

**EQUITY IMPACT:** Renewing Marin County Free Library’s parcel tax would allow the library to continue a number of equity focused programs including:

- Library Park Pass: Marin County Park passes are made available for check out at all library locations to reduce financial barriers to local parks for all residents.
- Allow the library to purchase and make available free technology resources for library patrons to use from home to support career and school success and reduce social isolation for older adults.
- Expand partnerships with local school districts to provide library services to districts needing additional library service and collection supports.
- Meet the library’s Educational Equity goals to increase student success in areas of need across Marin County: Marin City, West Marin and Novato.
- Expand mobile services to underserved populations.
- Continue early education services at all library and mobile library locations.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The existing parcel tax provides approximately $2.8 million in revenue to the library each year (with a CPI adjustment not to exceed 3% annually). The recommended $98 per parcel measure would result in approximately $4.7 million per year (an annual increase of $1.9 million) to maintain existing services, enhance library services, and better maintain existing facilities for residents. It would also include an annual CPI adjustment not to exceed 3% annually.

In addition, a senior exemption will be included, applicable to residents 65 years of age or older by December 31 of the tax year. Residents must own and occupy a single-family residence located in the Marin County Free Library District.

Please feel free to contact me 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,

Lana Adlawan
Director of County Library Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Presentation 1 Marin County Free Library 07-12-22 v.2
Presentation 2 Library Measure 07.12.22