July 19, 2022

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

SUBJECT:

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION:
Adopt resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the Marin County Free Library calling for an election to impose a special tax upon parcels located within the Marin County Free Library District for the purpose of providing essential funding to protect and maintain library services.

SUMMARY: At the direction of your Board, staff has been working to place a renewal of the library’s parcel tax on the upcoming General Election ballot to be held on November 8, 2022. At the July 12, 2022 Board of Supervisors’ meeting, staff provided a recommendation to the Board to increase the tax from $57.56 to $98 a parcel, for a period of nine years. A senior tax exemption and an annual CPI (not to exceed 3%) would accompany the renewal. The increase in the parcel tax allows necessary resources to better address areas of improvement identified by the community, while also providing a specific length of time to demonstrate the benefits of the additional investment in library services and facilities. After hearing public testimony, your Board approved this recommendation and requested staff schedule consideration of adoption of the resolution, which is the purpose of this item today.

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 current parcel tax rate for FY21-22 is $57.56.

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.

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 voter poll tested multiple service priorities to gauge voter support.

Voter Priorities (76.2% - 84.2% Voter Approval Rating)

1. Keep library branches from being closed.
2. Repair leaking roofs and siding and replace deteriorating foundations.
3. Increase book and ebook collections.
4. Maintain library services for seniors and families who are trying to improve their lives.
5. Maintain library hours and 24/7 online library access.

Other voter priorities that scored well above 72.9% included:

1. Make all libraries accessible for disabled people.
2. Provide free internet access, computers, and technology training.
3. Provide summer reading programs for children and teens.
4. Provide programs and services for seniors and disabled residents.
5. Enhance programs for children, teens, adults, and seniors.

NOVEMBER 8, 2022 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT
Based on the Board’s policy direction on July 12, 2022, a resolution was created to increase the library’s parcel tax to $98 per parcel for a period of nine years. Final ballot language in the resolution reflects voter priorities for the parcel tax renewal on the November 8, 2022 General Election ballot:

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?

Next Steps
If your board adopts the resolution presented today, staff will send the resolution to the Elections Department to place the measure on the November 8, 2022 General Election ballot.

EQUITY IMPACT: Renewing and increasing the library’s parcel tax would enable Marin County Free 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.
- Expand mobile services to underserved populations.
- Continue early education services at all library and mobile library locations.
- 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.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Marin County Elections Department estimates the
incremental cost of placing this measure on the ballot will be $75,000. Marin County
Free Library staff will work with the County Administrator’s Office to account for the
costs pending the result of the election. This measure, if passed, is expected to
generate approximately $4.7 million per year over the nine-year term to maintain
existing services, enhance library services, and better maintain existing facilities for
residents.

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, County Library Services

ATTACHMENTS:  A. Library Tax Resolution 7.19.22
B. Library Tax Measure Presentation 07.19.22