



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 12/15/2015
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NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: David Morrison - Director
Planning, Building and Environmental Services
REPORT BY: John Woodbury, Park and Open Space Prg Mgr - 259-5933
SUBJECT: Napa County Regional Parks and Open Space District Survey

RECOMMENDATION

Director of Planning, Building and Environmental Services requests the following:

1. Receive the letter from the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District dated November 30, 2015; and
2. Direct staff to work with the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District to prepare draft ballot measure language for consideration by the Board of Supervisors for placement on the November 2016 General Election, to fund the purposes of the District through a one-quarter cent sales tax.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District is about to enter its tenth year of operation since establishment by the Board of Supervisors and confirmation by the voters in November 2006.

The District is now approaching the limits of what more it can accomplish with its existing level of funding. Anticipating this, last year the District convened a Park and Open Space District Advisory Committee to review the District's track record and make recommendations for the future direction of the District. In May of this year the Advisory Committee issued its Final Report. The Final Report concluded that the District had developed an impressive track record, but that considerably more is needed (1) to protect Napa County's watershed lands, creeks and lakes, wildlife habitat and other significant open spaces, (2) to provide opportunities for nature-based recreational access to public open space lands, and (3) to educate future generations to value and take care of our natural environment. The Advisory Committee recommended the District work with Napa County to pursue a dedicated funding source, preferably a small sales tax increment, for these purposes, subject to further survey research to determine whether voters would support such dedicated funding.

This past summer the Land Trust of Napa County retained Godbe Research to conduct a survey of registered voters in Napa County. The survey results indicated strong voter support for the District and its goals, and concluded that a one-quarter cent sales tax to fund the District could receive more than the required two-thirds favorable vote.

After receiving the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, and evaluating Godbe Research's findings, the District Board of Directors on November 9, 2015 voted unanimously to request the County work with the District to develop specific ballot language for consideration by both Boards for placement of the November 2016 General Election ballot.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The County Board of Supervisors in 2006 adopted Resolutions 06-110 and 06-111 establishing the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District, subject to voter confirmation, which was approved at the November 2006 General Election. At the time of establishment, no dedicated tax funding was proposed; instead, the District until now has operated using a grant from the County's Special Projects Fund, which is funded by the 1.5 percent increase in the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) approved by the voters in 2004. For the past several years, the County has granted 60 percent of the Special Projects Fund to the District. Over the past decade the TOT has gradually increased, such that in the current fiscal year the District is receiving \$811,000 from the Special Projects Fund.

The District has leveraged the County Special Projects Fund grant with program revenues, other grants and gifts, and volunteer labor, at a ratio of three to one. The District now owns approximately 4,000 acres of open space, operates several parks (one regional park, three state parks, one wilderness park), operates portions of two regional trail systems (Bay Area Ridge Trail and San Francisco Bay Trail), is about to complete construction of an environmental education camp (Camp Berryessa), supports several small environmental education programs, and is well on the way to nearly doubling the size of the protected area that includes Skyline Wilderness Park.

Despite the District's impressive record of matching the County's grant with non-County funds and effectively implementing projects, the District is now approaching the limits of what more it can accomplish with its existing level of funding. Anticipating this, last year the District convened a Park and Open Space District Advisory Committee to review the District's track record and make recommendations for the future direction of the District. The Advisory Committee was asked to answer these basic questions: (1) has the District used its past funding wisely and effectively; (2) has the District now done enough, or is there more important work to do; and (3) if there is more that the District should be doing, how should it fund this work?

In May of this year the Advisory Committee issued its Final Report. The Final Report concluded that the District

had a great track record, but that considerably more was needed to protect Napa County's watershed lands, creeks and lakes, wildlife habitat and other significant open spaces, to provide opportunities for nature-based recreational access to public open space lands, and to educate future generations to value and take care of our natural environment. The committee recommended the District work with Napa County to pursue a dedicated funding source for these purposes, most likely a sales tax, subject to further research to determine whether Napa County voters would support such a tax. A sales tax was preferred by the Advisory Committee because it was perceived to be fairer than a parcel or property tax, and because up to 40 percent of Napa County sales tax revenues are paid by tourists and other non-residents. However, unlike parcel or property taxes, which the District can place on the ballot on its own initiative, the District can only propose a sales tax through a partnership with the County.

This past summer the Land Trust of Napa County retained Godbe Research to conduct a survey of registered voters in Napa County. The survey results indicated strong voter support for the District and its goals, and concluded that a one-half cent sales tax to fund the District could receive more than the required two-thirds favorable vote. A summary of key findings from the research is attached. Byron Godbe, President of Godbe Research, will be at the meeting to discuss their methodology, findings and recommendations. To increase the likelihood of passage, and given the uncertainties inherent in any survey, Godbe Research is recommending consideration of a one-quarter cent sales tax that sunsets after nine years.

A one-quarter cent sales tax would generate approximately \$8 million annually, or \$72 million if authorized for a nine year period. Combined with projected program revenues and the continuation of the County Transient Occupancy Tax-supported Special Projects Fund grant to the District, total District revenues for the nine year period would be around \$86 million. This compares to just over \$100 million in needs identified in a preliminary expenditure plan prepared for the Advisory Committee and included in the Committee's Final Report. If the Board of Supervisors authorizes moving forward with the development of a ballot measure, the District will refine the projections and propose a fiscally-balanced expenditure plan.

After receiving the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, and evaluating Godbe Research's findings, the District Board of Directors on November 9, 2015 voted unanimously to request the County work with the District to develop specific ballot language for consideration by both Boards for placement of the November 2016 General Election ballot.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- A . Letter from Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District
- B . Summary of Godbe Research Survey Results

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Liz Habkirk