



County of Sonoma Agenda Item Summary Report

Clerk of the Board
575 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Agenda Item Number:
(This Section for use by Clerk of the Board Only.)

To: Board of Supervisors

Board Agenda Date: July 10, 2018

Vote Requirement: Majority

Department or Agency Name(s):

Staff Name and Phone Number:

James Nantell 565-2946

Supervisorial District(s):

Title: Parks Sales Tax Measure

Recommended Actions:

Receive report from staff on Proposed November 2018 Parks Sales Tax Ballot Measure and,

- A. Adopt a resolution introducing proposed ordinance imposing a 1/8 cent transactions and use tax in Sonoma County for Regional Parks and City Parks and waiving further reading.
- B. Conduct a public hearing to consider whether to adopt an ordinance imposing a special transactions and use tax (sales tax) on Sonoma County to provide additional funding for Regional Parks and City Parks. The ordinance, if adopted, will be placed on the ballot at the November 6, 2018 election, and will become effective if it is approved by two-thirds (2/3) of the voters voting on the measure.

Executive Summary:

Sonoma County Regional Parks and City Parks provide a broad variety of experiences for Sonoma County residents and visitors, including developed and open space parks, multiuse bikeways, sports fields, playgrounds, swimming and boating opportunities, camping, and rustic trails. In addition, the open spaces protected by the Regional Park system preserve important ground water recharge areas, natural resources, watersheds and wildlife habitat. Through Partnerships with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (District) and nonprofit organizations, the Regional Parks system has expanded significantly over the past decade while also becoming increasingly utilized by both residents and visitors to the County. The Regional Park system now faces significant fiscal challenges being able to invest in aging infrastructure and amenities in the parks, the daily operations and maintenance services in existing parks, and dedicated funds to leverage state, federal and other sources to continue developing new open space parks and trails with public access and basic amenities including sustainable trails, permanent restrooms and effective management of the natural resources and fuel loads.

Regional Parks' staff have been exploring the possibility of a 1/8 cent special transaction and use (sales) tax on the November 6, 2018 ballot. Since the Spring of 2017, Regional Parks has been undertaking a community outreach effort to get a deeper understanding of the public's thinking about parks in Sonoma County and how the public prioritized park needs relative other needs. On June 13, 2018 the Board of Supervisors received a report on the potential Parks ballot measure and directed staff to return in July to place the measure on the ballot.

Discussion:

Since November of 2016 when the Parks Ballot Measure J narrowly missed the 2/3rds majority yes vote by 1,100 votes, there has been a strong interest from many in the community that the a funding measure be placed on a county wide ballot. Before proposing to return to the ballot, Regional Parks felt it was important to engage with local leaders and stakeholders with a community outreach effort. The results of that outreach effort are included in Attachment A and summarized below.

Phase I Outreach to City Elected and Appointed Leaders: conducted 60 hours of interviews with city council members and city managers during the summer of 2017. Five key findings emerged over the course of the interviews:

1. Parks enjoy nearly universal support;
2. Connectivity of communities to parks ranked high for everyone;
3. Public demand to open and expand more parks is very high;
4. Increasing participation in parks for more community members is valued strongly; and
5. As is the case with Regional Parks, cities have growing deferred maintenance needs and little to no funding for capital improvements.

On September 21, 2017, Regional Parks hosted a Parks Summit and presented the 2017 Outreach Report to a crowd of nearly 200 members of the public, elected and appointed officials.

Public Survey Poll: With the support of an outside grant from Resources Legacy Fund, Fairbanks, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associates conducted a public survey poll in late January 2018 to determine to the extent of public support of a possible parks ballot measure.

The summary of the polling results was:

1. The initial support for a Parks Funding Measure is 72 percent, ranging up to 76 percent after positive messaging, and held strong at 70 percent after negative messaging was tested.
2. Including the cities in the proposed measure reinforced support by 5 to 8 percent.
3. Favorability for Regional Parks was 89 percent, with un-favorability at 4 percent.
4. Public recognition of the need for additional funding was strong, especially after the fires, increasing 5 percent in the last two years (73 percent in 2018, compared to 68 percent from a comparable survey poll conducted in 2016).
5. 72 percent of voters approved of a two-thirds to one-third split on the revenues between the county and cities, respectively.

Phase II Community Outreach and Gathering Public Input: In February 2018, having suspended the community outreach and efforts to gather public input about spending priorities due to the October 2017 fire storms, Regional Parks initiated Phase II of the Outreach Plan. This phase is still in progress

with presentations to over 40 community organizations and stakeholders thus far. It also included two educational mailings to over 80,000 households requesting feedback on priorities for county spending and the possible parks ballot measure. Over 2,000 feedback cards have been received from the first mailer with 70 percent indicating that they would support a funding measure for parks. Replies to the second mailer, over 1500 to date, have confirmed the following priorities that came out of the meeting with community leaders, the January polling survey, and response to the first mailer:

1. Maintaining parks, trails, & open space
2. Protect water and natural resources for future generations
3. Bicycle and walking trails to connect cities and parks

Proposed Ballot Measure

The proposed sales tax measure would provide dedicated funding for Sonoma County Regional and City Park systems. Beginning with Doran Regional Park, established by County ordinance in 1967, County supervisors have created a park system which is among the most beautiful and diverse in the state. From Gualala Point Regional Park at the far north, to Tolay Lake Regional Park in the south, and iconic county mountaintops and their watersheds including Hood, Taylor and Sonoma Mountains, the system today includes 56 parks and trails. The creation and renewal of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District provided the mechanism for the purchase of a number of properties including, in addition to those listed above, the Laguna de Santa Rosa Trail, Riverfront Park, and Cloverdale River Park. The District has also acquired a number of additional parklands that await transfer to the Regional Park system, however, only very limited funding is provided for initial public access and long term operations and maintenance support is not included in the District's voter-approved expenditure plan.

Regional Parks are integral to the health and quality of life of county residents. Additionally, the 11,071 acres of parklands are critical to protecting natural resources, ecosystems and watersheds. There are now over 26,000 park members supporting the system representing approximately 10% of county housing units (<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/06097>; assumes one park membership per household). Day use of parks has doubled over the last five years, with park visitation exceeding 5 million visits annually. Volunteerism is at an all-time high, and national award-winning programs such as the Russian River Water Safety Patrol have been implemented saving lives and improving water safety on the Russian River. Programs and parks that specifically engage young and diverse populations have become integral to the departments mission providing environmental education and outdoor recreation to enhance the health and well-being of the community.

The increasing demand for parks and trails, escalating costs, backlog of facility maintenance and increasing natural resource threats, has park funding stretched to an unsustainable level. These circumstances are putting treasured resources at risk and putting pressure on Regional Parks to raise fees. General fund dollars for Regional Parks have remained relatively constant with general fund support at 17.81% of budget for the proposed 2018/19 fiscal year (excluding Transient Occupancy Tax revenues). Although Parks has been increasingly more dependent upon fees, park fee increases result in impacts to those who can least afford them thus decreasing their access to our open spaces and the important benefits associated with that access. Without a new dedicated funding source, the Regional

Park system is at risk of a major decrease in service levels, public safety, routine maintenance, and closures of trails, restrooms and other features that are failing and require investment to remain useable for the public. Additionally, park expansions and the development of existing parks will continue to be delayed with many park improvements and deferred maintenance needs put off indefinitely until grants or other fundraising can be completed.

The expenditure plan, which is Exhibit A of the attached resolution and ordinance, describes in detail the manner in which the proposed sales tax will be spent. Those expenditures would fall into four categories as shown below:

1. Support For Local City Parks And Recreation Needs - 33.3%	\$38,300,000
2. Invest In Maintenance, Safety And Recreation Services In Sonoma County Regional Parks, Trails And Open Space Preserves – 25%	\$28,750,000
3. Improve Access To Sonoma County Regional Parks, Trails And Open Space Preserves – 23.4%	\$26,840,000
4. Protect Natural Resources In Sonoma County Regional Parks, Trails And Open Space Preserves – 18.3%	\$21,110,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE PLAN COST OVER 10 YEARS (Assumes \$11.5 million per year)	\$115,000,000

The proposed measure would:

Increase public access to existing parks by improving trail systems, countywide multi-use walking, hiking, biking and equestrian trails, picnic areas, restrooms, playgrounds, campgrounds and other facilities. The measure would maintain and enhance parks and open space in all regions of Sonoma County, as detailed in the attached expenditure plan:

- Address deferred maintenance in regional parks, neighborhood parks and open space preserves
- Protect watersheds, water sources and recharge areas including rivers, creeks, estuaries and streams, enhance protection of natural areas and wildlife habitat
- Manage vegetation to preserve biodiversity and reduce wildfire risk
- Provide funding for programs including environmental education, healthy living, and expanded outreach to diverse, urban communities within Sonoma County
- All funds to stay within Sonoma County and funds cannot be taken away by the state government
- Independent citizens' oversight, mandatory financial audits and annual reports
- Visitors from outside Sonoma County would help pay to fund the parks, trails and open spaces they enjoy while visiting
- Prohibit the County Board of Supervisors and City Councils that elect to receive the city parks sales tax proceeds from supplanting the agencies' historical general fund contributions in support of the operating cost for providing park and recreation programs, facilities and services

The State sales tax cap is 7.25%, and state law limits the combined local sales tax to a total of 9.25%. In Sonoma County, the current rate varies from 8.125% to 9.125%. A complete overview of sales tax in Sonoma County jurisdictions is found in Attachment D. This would be a special tax dedicated only to Regional and City Parks and would require a 2/3 vote to be approved in November.

Prior Board Actions:			
On June 13, 2018 the Board of Supervisors received a report on the potential Parks ballot measure and directed staff to return in July to place the measure on the ballot.			
Strategic Plan Alignment Goal 2: Economic and Environmental Stewardship			
A successful Parks Measure will provide funding invest in park improvements and deferred maintenance to increase the useful life of our Regional and City Parks and facilities to serve the community over the next 20 years. In addition it will provide funding to invest in natural resources and water shed management to protect the environment.			
Fiscal Summary			
Expenditures	FY 18-19 Adopted	FY 19-20 Projected	FY 20-21 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	300,000		
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF	300,000		
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			
Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:			
<p>The cost of placing the measure on the ballot depends on a number of factors, including whether or not there is more than one county measure, actual voter registration, the number of pages of text needed in the voter pamphlet. Estimated costs are approximately \$300,000, but could be higher depending on the factors mentioned above. Funding was added from Contingencies as part of the 2018-19 Budget Hearing actions. If successful, the proceeds of the tax will cover the election costs associated with this measure.</p> <p>A successful ballot measure is estimated to generate an additional \$11.5 million annually for the next 10 years of which \$7,659,000 would go to Regional Parks and \$3,841,000 to city parks.</p>			

Staffing Impacts

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A. Resolution of Introduction			
B. Proposed Parks Measure Ordinance and Expenditure Plan			
C. Estimates of Funds to Cities			



County of Sonoma
State of California

Date: July 10, 2018

Item Number: _____
Resolution Number: _____

4/5 Vote Required

**Resolution Of The Board Of Supervisors Of The County Of Sonoma, State Of California,
Introducing, Reading The Title Of And Waiving Further Reading of A Proposed One-
Eighth Of One Percent Sales Tax Measure Entitled The “Sonoma County Parks
Improvement, Water Quality, And Fire Safety Measure Transactions And Use Tax
Ordinance,”**

Whereas, a proposed ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, introducing, reading the title of and waiving further reading of a proposed one-eighth of one percent sales tax measure entitled the “Sonoma County Parks Improvement, Water Quality, and Fire Safety Measure Transactions and Use Tax Ordinance,” has been introduced and the title read at a public hearing on July 10, 2018; and

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that further reading of the proposed ordinance is waived.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors will consider adoption of the proposed ordinance at their August 7, 2018 Board of Supervisors Meeting.

Supervisors:

Gorin:

Rabbitt:

Zane:

Hopkins:

Gore:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

So Ordered.