

LAC Meeting Highlights and Update:

The LAC's meetings have recently focused on exploring the possibility of placing a County-wide parcel tax measure on the November 2016 ballot. The discussion was facilitated by the City of Goleta's request for the LAC's support for a ballot measure on the November 2016 ballot that would ask voters in the City of Goleta and CSA No. 3 to authorize a parcel tax to help fund library services. The special tax would in essence help restore lost library hours that have been cut over the years due to budget issues that most local agencies have faced since 2006.

The LAC decided that rather than support one city's effort to raise money for its own libraries, it would consider a broader tax measure that could help all of the libraries in the County and City systems.

At its December 16, 2015 meeting the LAC decided that it would explore placement of a County-wide special parcel tax to support libraries on the November 2016 ballot in an amount to be determined at a later date. The LAC also created a sub-committee to research the issue of a special tax and develop the steps needed to ensure success once this is placed on the ballot. The sub-committee met several times and consulted with "Every Library", a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting with library measures. After several meetings and discussions with the consultant, the LAC, as a group, came to consensus on the following:

- The tax should be a parcel tax.
- The tax should be in perpetuity with an annual CPI adjustment.
- Tax proceeds should be distributed on a per capita basis
- That there be a "maintenance of effort agreement" from the cities. Because the effort is to enhance library hours/services, the LAC would like an acknowledgment from the cities that they would use their best efforts to maintain their current level of funding for libraries if this measure passes.

The sub-committee couldn't decide on the tax per parcel but agreed that it should analyze the impact to the libraries based on two options: \$18 per parcel and \$24 per parcel. The library zone directors were tasked with analyzing the data and bringing their findings back to the LAC. The librarians were also tasked with gauging the level of support from their Friends groups.

At a subsequent meeting, the LAC further discussed the proposed ballot measure; the tasks/steps needed for success; the dollar amount per parcel; responses from the Friends groups; and, obstacles for success.

After a lengthy discussion, the LAC decided against recommending placing ballot measures on the November 2016 ballot that include the unincorporated area of the County and the incorporated cities for the following reasons:

- A tax measure which includes the unincorporated area of the County and the incorporated cities of the County would need official action from each respective city council (8 cities)

to join this effort. If those councils voted in the affirmative, then each city would have to place their own separate ballot measure (although the language could be identical to the County measure) on the ballot. Given the time factor and steps needed to get every city on board with a similar ballot measure, the LAC felt it didn't have enough time in this election cycle to effectively pursue these measures.

- Most of the feedback the librarians received from their Friends groups was not favorable of a parcel tax, especially one that was in perpetuity. Most support groups stated that they would not support a tax, with some stating that they would actively oppose and campaign against such a measure.
- Some "Friends" groups thought they could support the measure but had reservations about what may be tepid support from other parts of the County, which would impact the likelihood of these measures passing.
- The need to get support for measures from all of the cities compounded the problem of placing these measure on the ballot because time didn't allow for development of a needed unified approach.

After all that was said and done, the LAC decided it would be best to look at the option of pursuing alternative methods to finance and provide library services in the County that would eliminate the need for the cities to actively take a position and prepare their own ballot measures, such as a JPA, CSA, or something else, if at all. The intent is to have one unified ballot measure. The LAC wanted to pursue this for the election cycle in 2018.

In addition to exploring alternative methods to finance and provide library services in the County, CSD Staff agreed to present the Board with other options that would help raise money needed for libraries.

These options include a special tax measure for the parcels in the unincorporated areas of the County, and a measure increasing the special tax rate in CSA No. 3.