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Giving Dreams an Address

Moraga revenue measure survey

... continued from page A1

The survey that will be discussed on Nov. 8 was conducted by Godbe Research and was facilitated through different types of media: emails, land lines and cell phones. Cunningham explains that there were different iterations of the survey, some testing negative views of the town, some testing positive views, and that it had been constructed by Godbe using surveying best practices that she says are based on scientific methods.

Cunningham explained that the survey combined two types of questions: Would residents support a utility users tax, or would they support a parcel fee for storm drains? She said that the double set of questions could have made the survey somewhat confusing, but that the town combined it in order to save money.

The fee could be put on a March mail-in ballot requiring only a 50 percent majority. The funds garnered would be restricted to storm drains only and would not improve the state of the town's reserves. The UUT would have to be put on a regular ballot, such as in the November 2018 election. The survey results indicated that residents would not support this option, and Cunningham indicated that for this reason staff would not recommend this option at this time.

One troubling fact that emerged from the survey was that 43 percent of the population believes that the town is "not going in the right direction," twice as many people responding this way over last year, when a majority trusted the town. The question was vague, however, and did not provide an explanation about what was wrong and what should be changed.

The results of the survey will be presented to the town council on Nov. 8, and can be found online at <http://www.moraga.ca.us/StormDrainProject>. It is not certain that the council will make any type of decision on that day. As usual, the meeting is public and residents are encouraged to participate. The meeting can also be seen live online at livestream.com/moraga.

Facts about UUTs and a storm drain fee

User utility taxes are taxes that a city or county can impose on utility bills such as electricity, gas, water, sewer, telephone (including cell phones), sanitation and cable television. In California the rate varies from a low of 1 percent to a high of 11 percent. A UUT is either a general tax placed on a regular ballot that requires a simple majority vote, or a special tax restricted to the purpose stated in the measure; it can then be proposed at any election and needs a 2/3 majority. About half of the residents of California pay a UUT. The survey proposed a UUT that would generate \$1.9 million annually to the town, an increase of about 20 percent of its current budget, equating to approximately \$316 per household per year. The revenue could be used for other purposes than storm drains. Because utility bills can vary greatly from residence to residence, however, the estimated tax burden for one household could be sizably different from another.

The storm drain fee would not be the same for different properties; it would vary depending on how much that property impacts the storm drain system. It would be calculated contingent upon the amount of impervious surface around houses or commercial properties. Size of a property and aerial pictures can be used to determine the fee. If someone replaces a concrete driveway with permeable pavers, that person could appeal for a lower fee. Residents part of an HOA who already pay a fee for the private drainage in the HOA would pay a lower fee.



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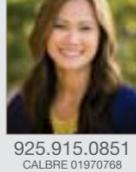
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