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**Property fee assessment for storm drains headed toward a special election**

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga Town Council decided to no longer kick the storm drains down the road.

"It is important that the council speak unanimously on this issue," Mayor Dave Trotter exhorted his council members Jan. 24, and Trotter got his wish. The council unanimously authorized adopting ballot procedures to charge residents for the \$26 million the town says it needs to repair its storm drain infrastructure.

The Moraga Revenue Enhancement Committee alerted town officials in 2009 of the need for revenue for storm drain repair, but when voters passed Measure K in 2012, imposing a 1 percent general purpose sales tax in the town, the council determined that roads were the major need at the time.

In response to the committee findings, the town completed a Storm Drain Master Plan in 2015, and residents specifically mentioned storm drain repair as one of the top town priorities in a 2016 community survey. Yet despite higher than expected property tax revenue since 2014, the town set aside no money for storm drain improvements, and the town seeks to place a property fee assessment on the ballot in a May special election, which could cost the town up to \$100,000.

"The time to act is now," said Council Member Kymberleigh Korpus, with residents having just endured the aggravation of a sinkhole for 20 months.

If a majority of ballots cast at the special election approve the initiative, owners of an average-sized single-family residence will be assessed \$120 each year, and owners of multi-family residences and commercial property will pay up to \$940 per acre annually. Even schools and churches will pay the fee. The measure, projected to bring in nearly \$800,000 per year, includes no end date and allows for up to a 3 percent annual inflation increase.

Property owners who object to the fee assessment may plead their case prior to or at a public hearing scheduled for March 14. According to Edric Kwan, public works director, any owner of a parcel of real property subject to the proposed storm drain fee may file a legibly signed protest with the town clerk, identifying the parcel by address or assessor's parcel number. If a majority of parcel owners object to the fee before the hearing, there will be



Canyon Road

Photos provided



St. Mary's Road



Rheem Boulevard and Center Street

no special election.

New homeowners, strapped with higher property taxes than long-time residents, receive no break on the storm drain fee; the only discount goes to parcel owners on private sewer systems. Furthermore, though the proposed fee would be added to owners' property tax bills, the storm drain fee is not tax deductible, Kwan said.

Trotter said that early polling supported the storm drain fee, but the mayor was taking no chances.

There are limits to what public officials can do to promote their own ballot measures, but Trotter made it clear to the council members that nothing prevents them from independently doing anything they want in the community to support the initiative.

The town staff will hold public informational meetings on the storm drain fee initiative, with the first ones scheduled for 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Feb. 12 at the town chambers.



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**POETRY**

**KALEIDOSCOPE**  
by resident Lilana Kitts

Goodnight, I say, to Father Time  
It is not my style to linger  
Over vintage wines and Roman cheeses  
I welcome the New Year

But, I pause after I say it  
I cannot obliterate the times of laughter or tears  
Life is a kaleidoscope  
Every color has its season.

A baby's skin is a warm peach  
Dear to a mother's touch  
The spring of youth leaps in grassy  
Green fields of distant lands.

Bright red roses call summertime lovers  
Each feeling their passion unique  
Drifting autumn leaves make golden years  
A melody of tender memories.

Winter brings well-earned repose  
Faith mellows the bracing day  
While colors multiply in our hearts  
Swirling in whirlpools of darkness and whirlwinds of light.

The mourning dove sometimes lingers  
With a coat of gray  
It overshadows the hot sun  
Until the restful morning after.

Yes, life is a kaleidoscope  
A symbol of dreams  
With pink hellos and blue goodbyes  
A mood swinging rotation of our days.

Goodnight, Father Time  
Like your seasons I have the right to change my mind  
I don't pretend to be wise, it's late in life  
I ponder all the colors of yesteryear.

Today I am content with friends old and new  
Spumante is festive and sweet  
Apple pie is good  
Citron oranges glow on my dreamy Christmas tree.

There are no clouds in the holiday sky  
Angels blossom next to the berries on my wreath  
My world shines  
Wishing all a Happy Kaleidoscope year.

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**1132 Victory Lane, Concord**



Two homes on a secluded +/- 1/2 acre lot! Main home is single-story with 3 BR & 2 baths, in almost 2000 sf of up-graded space, with pool & well. 2nd is 600sf 1bd/1 bath with living room, kitchen & laundry, plus storage sheds and a fenced yard—perfect in-law or rental. Country living close to city and freeways, shopping, parks & trails. Offered at \$750,000 by Suzie Tinsley 925.787.3072.

**2180 Geary Road #8, Pleasant Hill**



Charming 2 bd/1 bath condo with 855 sf of living space, and views of Mt. Diablo from bedroom windows! Private stairwell entry and balcony that overlooks Greenbelt. Great neighborhood & location, convenient to shopping & freeways. For more information, call Lisa Shaffer 925.528.9278.

**268 Hillcrest Circle, Pleasant Hill**



Spacious tri-level townhome with 3BR & 2.5 baths and 1912sf! End unit featuring a large lush yard, gorgeous redwood trees, patios, deck, level areas for playground PLUS finished basement! Very well appointed with modern conveniences, including a chair lift and master retreat. Offered at \$759,999 by Suzie Tinsley 925.787.3072.

**30 Lancaster Ct., Alamo**



Stunning 3-bed, 2.5-bath single level home features an updated kitchen w/granite counters, Wolf 6-burner stove, cozy nook and more! Located in coveted Stonegate, it is part of a gated community with tennis courts, security, greenbelts. Sold for \$1,347,000 by Suzie Tinsley, 925.787.3072.

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