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Moraga School District votes yes for storm drain fee

By *Sophie Braccini*

As the results from the vote regarding the storm drain fee are expected any day now, the Moraga School District board gave a last minute boost to the proponents of the fee by deciding to vote yes for its own parcels during its May 8 meeting. According to board president Richard Severy, the members had felt it necessary to take several months to gather information and public opinion before making the decision. While the MSD board does not like to spend extra dollars, as budget is tight, it felt nonetheless it was the board's responsibility to pay its share for supporting the local infrastructure.

In his presentation to the board, Superintendent Bruce Burns noted that the district benefits from the storm drainage system and that recent drainage failures have impacted schools, namely the Rheem sinkhole and Canyon Bridge. The superintendent also indicated that the system is old, sometimes undersized and that two-thirds of the residents responded in a survey that they wanted to have the system upgraded.

The school district owns six properties, four of which are schools. The total annual fee the district would be asked to pay is \$21,600, which is about one-tenth of 1 percent of the district's budget.

Severy said after the meeting that the money in the district is tight but that the board members considered this fee a part of the utility the district pays for services such as gas and electricity, water and sewage, and that it was normal that the district pay its fair share as any other member of the community. He noted that the town has a mechanism to appeal the fee if property owners challenge the amount assessed to their property and that the district reserves its right to review the fee and appeal the amount if it finds it unfair, should it be approved by a majority of voters.

The board chair emphasized that the board would not have made its decision sooner because of its desire to get comprehensive input from the town in February and March, and from its constituency in April, before making its final decision. He added that the board never considered the campaign signs that sprouted along Moraga Road in order to make its decision and that the board had nothing to do with that campaign on either side of the issue.

Three of the five board members were present on the night of the vote and unanimously approved directing Burns to vote yes on the ballots allocated to the district.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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