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AGENDA
BOARD LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
Friday, May 16, 2014
12:45 p.m., Peralta Oaks Board Room

The following agenda items are listed for Committee consideration. In accordance with the Board Operating Guidelines, no official action of the Board will be taken at this meeting; rather, the Committee's purpose shall be to review the listed items and to consider developing recommendations to the Board of Directors.

AGENDA

<u>STATUS</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>STAFF</u>
(R)	12:45 p.m.	I. STATE LEGISLATION / ISSUES A. NEW LEGISLATION 1. AB 1799 (Gordon) – Endowment Exemptions for Public Agencies for the Long-term Stewardship of Mitigation Properties 2. ACR 130 (Rendon) – Parks Make Life Better Month!	Doyle/Pfuehler
(R)		B. ISSUES 1. Governor's May Budget Revise 2. Park Bond Efforts 3. DeSaulnier Bicycle Infrastructure bill 4. Other issues	Doyle/Pfuehler
(R)		II. FEDERAL LEGISLATION / ISSUES A. NEW LEGISLATION 1. H.R. 188 – 21 st Century Civilian Conservation Corps Act (Kaptur D-OH) 2. H.R. 750 – Congressional Gold Medal for Steward Lee Udall (Thompson D-CA)	Doyle/Pfuehler
(R)		B. ISSUES 1. Update on NRPA debrief 2. Other issues	Doyle/Pfuehler
		III. PUBLIC COMMENTS	
		IV. ARTICLES	

(R) Recommendation for Future Board Consideration
 (I) Information
 (D) Discussion

Future 2014 Meetings:

June 20, 2014	October 24, 2014
July 18, 2014	November 21, 2014
August 15, 2014	December 19, 2014
September 19, 2014	

Legislative Committee Members:
 Doug Siden, Chair, Ted Radke, John Sutter,
 Whitney Dotson, Alternate
 Erich Pfuehler, Staff Coordinator

Board of Directors

John Sutter President Ward 2	Ayn Wieskamp Vice-President Ward 5	Whitney Dotson Treasurer Ward 1	Ted Radke Secretary Ward 7	Beverly Lane Ward 6	Carol Severin Ward 3	Doug Siden Ward 4	Robert E. Doyle General Manager
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Distribution/Agenda Only

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Yolande Barial
Nancy Kaiser
Ted Radosevich
Connie Swisher
Mimi Waluch

Distribution/Agenda Only

Public:

Judi Bank
Bruce Beyaert
Afton Crooks
Stana Hearne
Michael Kelley
Norman LaForce
Dan Levy

Distribution/Full Packet

District:

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Robert E. Doyle
General Manager

TO: Board Legislative Committee
(Chair Doug Siden, Ted Radke, John Sutter and Alternate Whitney Dotson)

FROM: Robert E. Doyle, General Manager
Erich Pfuehler, Government Relations and Legislative Affairs Manager

SUBJECT: Board Legislative Committee Meeting
WHEN: Friday, May 16, 2014 - 12:45 p.m.
Lunch will be served

WHERE: Board Room, Peralta Oaks

Items to be discussed:

I. STATE LEGISLATION / ISSUES

A. NEW LEGISLATION

I. AB 1799 (Gordon D-Menlo Park) – Endowment Exemptions for Public Agencies for the Long-term Stewardship of Mitigation Properties

Assembly Member Rich Gordon introduced legislation, AB 1799, which would exempt specified special districts and governmental entities from the requirement to use endowments or other funding instruments to fund long-term stewardship of mitigation property. The exemption applies if the special district or governmental entity demonstrates financial reliability and provides either a board resolution or contractual agreement for the long-term stewardship of mitigation property. This legislation is being sponsored by the Santa Clara Valley Water District. They view the current requirement that the strictest funding instrument – permanent endowments – as too restrictive since the same public agency contributing to the endowment is also managing the property. As an example, the author notes the Santa Clara Valley Water District was required to set aside over 400 acres at Coyote Ridge in mitigation to be maintained in perpetuity. The ongoing costs of managing the property were estimated at \$80,000 per year. Rather than being able to budget for this maintenance cost annually, the district was requested to set aside \$5 million in an endowment account.

By easing this requirement, public agencies could repurpose funds previously set aside for endowments. The bill does include a safeguard if the public agency's credit rating is downgraded or if the agency fails to provide adequate stewardship. Should either circumstance occur, the state or local agency enforcing the mitigation requirement may require the posting of collateral in the form of a performance bond, escrow account, casualty insurance, letter of credit or other appropriate instrument.

Opponents assert this bill would undermine the long standing environmental policy of the state which requires mitigation of loss or damage to natural resources when a project is developed. They assert exempting governmental entities and special districts creates an un-level playing field, and also places in doubt the long-term stewardship of mitigation lands since the budgets of such entities may vary dramatically from year to year. Some amendments have been considered to address the concerns of those opposed; including requiring an enforceable contract, allowing the possibility of a future endowment to be required and adding a five year sunset clause.

The bill is supported by the California Special Districts Association, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Open Space Authority Santa Clara Valley and the Contra Costa Water District. It has been opposed by the California Council of Land Trusts, Environmental Defense

Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Staff Recommendation: SUPPORT

2. ACR 130 (Rendon D-Lakewood) – Parks Make Life Better! Month

ACR 130 would designate the month of July 2014 as “Parks Make Life Better!” Month. The resolution recognizes the important role parks play in reducing obesity, increasing physical activity and reducing health care costs. The resolution is supported by the California Park and Recreation Society.

Staff Recommendation: SUPPORT

B. ISSUES

1. Governor’s May Budget Revise

By the time of this meeting, Governor Jerry Brown will likely have announced his revised 2014-15 budget. In January, he proposed a \$154.9 billion spending plan that includes modest increases for social service programs, but also billions of dollars to address long-term debt. Recently, he has pushed for a “rainy day fund” Constitutional Amendment to set aside up to 10% of the General Fund into a reserve fund for economic downturns. The current budget projections are a surplus of between \$4 and \$5 billion. Social service advocates and some Democrats have been pressing the Governor to use some of the surplus revenue to expand spending in some areas, including for pre-kindergarten education.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office estimates California has \$340 billion in debt and recommends the state set priorities for paying down its key long-term liabilities. The largest obligations are \$73.7 billion for the teachers’ retirement system and \$64.6 billion for retired state employees’ health benefits. Most expect the Governor’s revise to reflect a significant commitment to paying down this “wall of debt” in addition to the “rainy day fund.”

2. SB 1086 (de Leon D-Los Angeles) - The Safe Neighborhood Parks, Rivers, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2014

SB 1086, the placeholder for a new state park bond, passed the Senate Appropriations Committee by a vote of 7 to 0 on May 5th and was placed on the suspense file. General Manager Robert E. Doyle testified in support on April 8th. Doyle and Advocate Doug Houston will provide an update.

3. SBI 183 (DeSaulnier D-Concord) – Local Bike Infrastructure Enhancement Act of 2014

SB 1183 authorizes local governments to impose vehicle registration surcharges to fund bicycle infrastructure maintenance and improvements. The bill would authorize regional park districts, cities and counties to impose a surcharge of up to \$5 on motor vehicles registered within their jurisdictions and use the revenue to maintain and improve bicycle trail networks. Under the rules of Prop. 26, this bill does not directly impose a higher fee on Californians, so it is a majority vote measure in the Legislature. The action to increase the registration surcharge, however, may be a two-thirds vote of the local electorate. The bill passed Senate Transportation and Housing Committee by a vote of 6 to 4 on April 30th. General Manager Robert E. Doyle testified in support on April 29th. Doyle and Advocate Doug Houston will provide an update.

4. Other issues

II. FEDERAL LEGISLATION / ISSUES

A. NEW

1. **H.R. 188 (Kaptur D-OH) – 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps Act**

Sponsored by Ohio Representative Marcy Kaptur, the 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps Act (CCCA) is a job creation program for unemployed and underemployed civilians to advance useful public works projects aimed at safeguarding natural resources and developing new transportation and infrastructure. Rep. Kaptur represents a district in Ohio with significant unemployment – particularly among veterans. While her bill is not likely to achieve enough support in this Congress, the concept has been embraced by Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell. She is championing the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) as a way to address job training needs.

The 21CSC charter calls for it to develop “National Partnerships to support 21CSC.” The Partnership supports the development and implementation of the 21CSC to reach its goal of engaging 100,000 young people and veterans per year in conservation service. The Partnership’s members include key federal, state, local and non-profit leaders and stakeholders of the 21CSC.

21 CSC has been promoted by Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell who is trying to raise private funds to support the program – including \$1 million from American Eagle Outfitters and \$100,000 from CamelBak (a Petaluma-based water bottle company). Other financial supporters are AmeriCorps and the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). They are looking for local land and water managers to engage in the 21CSC programs to complete projects – including the hiring of crews. Examples of 21CSC projects include: trail construction, tree planting, stream restoration, park construction, wildfire prevention and invasive species removal. The District could be well positioned to participate in this program, but the Partnership assumes some contribution of regular maintenance and operational funds.

Supporting Representative Kaptur’s bill with an acknowledgement of the Secretary’s 21 CSC initiative would be consistent with the District’s history and current job training needs.

Staff Recommendation: SUPPORT

2. **H.R. 750 (Thompson D-CA) Congressional Gold Medal for Stewart Lee Udall**

Representative Mike Thompson introduced this legislation to posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to Stewart Lee Udall in recognition of his contributions to the Nation as a hero for the environment, a champion for conservation, a civil right activist, a Native American crusader and an advocate for the arts. As Secretary of the Interior from 1961 to 1968, he became a hero for the environmental and conservation communities supporting among other things the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Land and Water Conservation Fund of 1965.

The District took the unprecedented step of contracting with former Interior Secretary Udall’s firm to facilitate the development of its Master Plan in 1973. More recently the Udall Foundation sponsored a Parks in Focus program which included the District as one of its partners. In 2007, Stewart L. Udall was awarded the Honorable Cornelius Amory Pugsley Award by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (an award bestowed to District representatives Richard Trudeau in 1990, Carol Severin in 2000 and Pat O’Brien in 2003).

Given the District’s history with Stewart Udall and that the sponsor of the legislation now

represents portions of the District near Martinez, Crockett and Hercules, it would be appropriate to support this legislation.

Staff Recommendation: SUPPORT

B. ISSUES

1. **Update on NRPA debrief**

Legislative Affairs Manager Erich Pfuehler will verbally provide any additional updates from the NRPA debriefing workshop held in between legislative committee meetings on May 6th.

2. **Other issues**

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

IV. CORRESPONDENCE AND ARTICLES

- a. "Anti-drought bill the talk of the California delegation", Sacramento Bee, May 7, 2014
- b. "Interior secretary: Contra Costa conservation efforts are a model for the nation", Contra Costa Times, May 5, 2014
- c. "How top-two primary system has changed California politics", SF Gate, May 6, 2014
- d. "Building homes, not a fortress, in Alameda", San Francisco Chronicle, May 6, 2014
- e. "Bill seeks to ask motorists to fund bike trail improvements", SF Gate, May 3, 2014

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

CA-Politics

Anti-drought bill the talk of the California delegation

McClatchy Washington Bureau (Michael Doyle)
Posted: 05/07/2014 3:06 PM



Beneath a placid surface, California lawmakers are furiously churning to keep an anti-drought bill afloat.

They're counting votes, making tradeoffs and tinkering with language. They're confronting singular political calculations like: Will a Lake Mead provision for Nevada, home state of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, cause problems with other Democrats upstream in Colorado?

And, no mean feat, they are meeting.

For an hour Wednesday morning, half-a-dozen House Democrats convened privately with Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., to discuss her anti-drought legislation. Tellingly, the Northern California Democrats entered the meeting voicing caution _ Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Calif., echoed others in saying parts of Feinstein's bill were "problematic" _ but they exited smiling.

"It was a great meeting," Thompson said afterward. "She has made changes that alleviate some of our concerns."

Feinstein usually keeps her cards close to the chest, saying Wednesday only that "this was a private meeting and I'd like to keep it at that." Her third floor office in the Hart Senate Office Building, though, has become the go-to spot for California water talks of late.

Earlier this year, House Republicans from the San Joaquin Valley trooped over for an extended private chat with the state's senior senator. The Republicans, from freshman Rep.

David Valadao to House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy, shepherded an anti-drought bill through the House on largely a party line vote in early February.

The House bill limits part of a landmark 1992 law that directed more water to protect the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. It removes wild-and-scenic protections from a half mile of the Merced River in order to potentially expand McClure Reservoir, lengthens federal irrigation contracts to 40 years and makes it easier to move water around the state.

The far-reaching House bill can't get through the Democratic-controlled Senate. The more modest measure introduced by Feinstein and her California colleague, Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer, in turn, won't satisfy the GOP-controlled House.

Feinstein's immediate balancing act now is to modify her 28-page bill enough to secure the five Republican Senate votes probably needed to reach the 60-vote threshold for ending a filibuster, all while not alienating Democrats. Once through the Senate, the legislation will be hammered into its final form in a House and Senate conference committee, though a lot of the deal-making could be done before.

"We're on the same boat," Rep. Doris Matsui, D-Calif., said Wednesday. "She's really done a remarkable job of bringing people and the agencies together."

Some of the balancing acts ahead deal with policy, like the Senate bill language increasing Colorado River storage in Lake Mead. Others deal with money. The Senate bill lures some other western lawmakers by boosting drought relief and water project funding. This same potential funding increase, though, turns off GOP fiscal hawks.

Other tactical considerations include whether the bill is better off if it deals only with California, and whether its provisions should be permanent or temporary. Departing the meeting Wednesday, Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., stressed that while "it's encouraging, we're not there on all the parts yet," and other lawmakers agreed, including those who clash with Miller on some specifics.

"We continue to work every day to move it along," said Rep. Jim Costa, D-Calif.

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Interior secretary: Contra Costa conservation efforts are a model for the nation

By Paul Burgarino Contra Costa Times

POSTED: 05/05/2014 09:46:01 AM PDT 0 COMMENTS | UPDATED: A DAY AGO



Executive Director of the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy John Kopchik, left, walks with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, second from left, while walking up to Kreiger Peak during a tour in Contra Costa County, Calif., on Monday, May 5, 2014. Jewell is visiting the lands ...

ANTIOCH -- Making her second visit to East Contra Costa in less than two months, U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell on Monday lauded the region as a model for the nation in the area of habitat conservation.

Her visit, sandwiched between a speech at Stanford University and a San Francisco appearance, sought to shine a spotlight on the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan, which was launched more than a decade ago to preserve wetlands, endangered species and open space while standardizing the collection of fees from developers.

"What (the plan has) done here is a really good illustration of multiple local and state agencies working together with federal agencies and nonprofit partners," she said. "You're setting a really great tone and tenor."



After years of planning, land acquisition began in 2008. Since then, about one-third of the roughly 30,000 acres targeted in the regional preserve system from the former Naval Weapons Station site in Concord to the Los Vaqueros Reservoir south of Brentwood has been purchased at a cost of \$59 million -- in part funded with grant money from Jewell's department.

The local plan is one of 14 regional habitat-conservation plans in California that are approved or are in development, according to the Interior Department.

"I applaud you moving to a landscape level of understanding, instead of piecemeal. That's where the rest of the country needs to go," Jewell told about a dozen stakeholders high atop Kreiger Peak during a hike north of Mount Diablo.

"You are saying where are the corridors, where is the habitat, where is the development potential, where are the conflicts; that's what we need to do across the landscapes."

Robert Doyle, general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District, said coordination among the various agencies has helped provide popular trails and preserve open space in a rapidly growing suburban area.

Local government agencies in the conservation plan are Clayton, Pittsburg, Oakley, Brentwood and the county. Jewell, who asked several questions during the hike and took copious notes during a stakeholder meeting, directly asked why Antioch is not in the group.

John Kopchik, the conservancy's executive director, said the city is in the "considering process" of joining and noted he made a presentation before the City Council in October.

"They're thinking through what makes sense to them," he said.

Kopchik was lauded by several local leaders and homebuilders for helping push the plan forward. Jewell called him a "pied piper."

"John saw the development community as an opportunity, rather than an adversary," said Mike Serpa, principal at Concentric Development Group, during a round-table discussion at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve in Antioch, adding that he's a plan proponent. "If we can find those marriage points, we can find some benefits."

The effectiveness of the conservation plans also shows the importance of the Endangered Species Act, Jewell said.

The former chief executive of REI also commented on the East Bay Regional Park District's efforts to hold several programs for youths and creativity in its land use.

In March, Jewell toured a federal water storage and pumping plant in Byron to get a firsthand look at a key piece of California's water infrastructure.

Several key environmental issues important to the Obama administration are present in California and the region, including climate change, she said.

Contact Paul Bugarino at 925-779-7164. Follow him at [Twitter.com/paulbugarino](https://twitter.com/paulbugarino).



U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and other members of local organizations look east from Kreiger Peak during a tour in Contra Costa County, Calif., on Monday, May 5, 2014. (Jose Carlos Fajardo/Bay Area News Group)

How top-two primary system has changed California politics

Carla Marinucci

Updated 8:14 am, Tuesday, May 6, 2014



The new system has reshaped some races, including the hotly contested Southern California contest to replace retiring Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles. Photo: Associated Press

California's political campaigns are already combative and expensive, but the top-two primary system, in effect this year for the first time in statewide races, has upped the ante by forcing new strategies in fundraising, polling and even the timing of attack ads.

And it may be the political consultants, not the voters, who benefit most, some experts say.

The new system, in which the top two finishers in the June 3 primary races advance to the November general election regardless of party, "is exponentially more complicated than a traditional primary system," said Democratic pollster [Ben Tulchin](#).

Tulchin, whose clients have included the state [Democratic Party](#) and Lt. Gov. [Gavin Newsom](#), said the system has created a host of complications, and a lot of business, for consultants advising once-safe candidates who now have to contend with expensive primary challenges from candidates on all sides of the spectrum.

Many candidates must calculate how to run back-to-back elections against the same challenger - weighing the merits of expending effort and money before the June primary versus keeping the powder dry for November.

It's all different

"Everything is so much more expensive," said [Ruben Barrales](#), president and CEO of Grow Elect, which works to elect Republican Latinos. "We're doing polling earlier than ever, and every race is different (than it used to be) - even in the same district."

When top-two primaries were first put into effect in congressional races in 2012, there were several instances in which a Democrat wound up being pitted against a Democrat in the general election, with no Republican on the ballot, and vice versa. In one heavily Democratic district in Southern California, a host of Democratic candidates split their party's vote in the primary, leaving two GOP candidates to face each other in the runoff.

This is the first year in which top two is in play in races for state constitutional offices, including governor.

[Julie Griffiths](#), a Republican strategist, said the new system is "causing business interests to weigh in more often and more generously" on behalf of [Democrats](#) who are "business friendly" in races where Republicans are unlikely to make a credible challenge.

Under top two, she said, "the money movement has changed - and it has increased dramatically."

Hair pulling aside, the new system has at least partly fulfilled advocates' hopes by creating more competitive primaries, said [Steve Spinner](#), a Democratic fundraiser.

'Poster child' race

Spinner is campaign chairman for Ro Khanna, a Democrat who is mounting a strong challenge in the South Bay to seven-term Rep. [Mike Honda](#), D-San Jose. He calls the race a "poster child" for why the new system works.

Under the old system in the heavily Democratic district, a second-place finish in the primary for Khanna would have been the end of the line. Under top two, however, Khanna can finish second and live to fight in November, competing with Honda for Republicans' votes.

"Every time someone retires or an incumbent is perceived as having a weak record, you'll see more pragmatic and visionary candidates enter, and less pandering to the far left and far right," Spinner said. "Now we can have races in our own backyards, in California, that are run like battleground states in a presidential election - with voters fully engaged in the process, supporters canvassing and candidates debating on the issues."

Voters put the top-two system in place when they approved Proposition 14 in 2010. Its author, former state Sen. and Lt. Gov. [Abel Maldonado](#), argued that the old primary system produced candidates acceptable mainly to party activists who demanded ideological purity.

But experts who convened recently for a symposium on the new system at the [UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies](#) were mixed on its effects.

Left, right still dominate

Tulchin agreed that even under the new system, California's 2014 primary "still favors the more progressive candidates on the Democratic side, and the more conservative candidates on the Republican side."

Polls in the gubernatorial campaign seem to bear that out: Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) is well out in front, and the No. 2 candidate is Assemblyman [Tim Donnelly](#) of Twin Peaks (San Bernardino County) - a Tea Party favorite who is trouncing a more moderate Republican, Neel Kashkari.

But Democratic strategist [Katie Merrill](#) said the new system has reshaped some races, including the hotly contested Southern California contest to replace retiring Rep. [Henry Waxman](#), D-Los Angeles.

Democrats in the 21-candidate field, rather than simply worrying about one another, now have to contend with a high-profile independent: author and New Age spiritual guru [Marianne Williamson](#), whose name recognition and loyal following in a district that includes Malibu and Beverly Hills could catapult her into the general election.

Unique political landscape

David Brady, a political science professor and deputy director of the Hoover Institution at [Stanford University](#), said the full effects of California's new system aren't yet fully felt in what is already a unique national political landscape.

"The United States is the only country that has democracy within the parties - before you can run against the other party," Brady said. "That is unique, but it has consequences. It weakens parties."

Which is why party loyalists who fought the top-two system from the start, and third-party candidates - who are more likely to be shut out of the general election entirely under the system - are still railing against it.

"Can you imagine a Kentucky Derby with two horses?" asked [Bob Mulholland](#), a Democratic Party campaign adviser. "This is the way the communists run it."

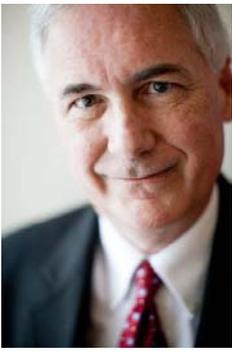
Shifts in campaign strategy

Three California races where the top-two primary system is making a difference:

Silicon Valley

Rep. Mike Honda, D-San Jose, a favorite of labor, is battling Democratic challenger Ro Khanna, a former Obama administration trade representative with the backing of many tech-industry executives. Also vying for a top-two slot are two Republicans: Silicon Valley executive recruiter [Joel VanLandingham](#) and Stanford physician [Vanila Singh](#).

Bottom line: The 17th Congressional District, where Democrats outnumber Republicans 2 to 1, is also home to the largest bloc of "no party preference" voters in California: nearly 32 percent. That makes Honda's re-election, almost a given under the old primary system, a far greater challenge if he ends up in the November runoff with Khanna.



Conservative icon Rep. [Tom McClintock](#) confronts a strong challenge from fellow [Republican Art Moore](#), a West Point graduate who spent more than a decade in the military.

Sierra foothills

Bottom line: McClintock, who would have been invincible under the old primary system in the overwhelmingly Republican Fourth Congressional District, could have problems in a November runoff with Democrats and independents able to choose between him and Moore.

Southern California

The retirement of Democratic Rep. Henry Waxman in the wealthy region that includes Beverly Hills and Malibu prompted 21 candidates to run to replace him - 11 Democrats, four Republicans, one Green Party member, one Libertarian and four "no party preference" candidates.

Bottom line: The huge field in the 33rd Congressional District, especially in the Democratic ranks, could enable a dark horse such as New Age guru Marianne Williamson, an independent with big name recognition, to sneak into the November runoff.

Carla Marinucci is senior political writer for The San Francisco Chronicle. E-mail: cmarinucci@sfnchronicle.com Twitter: [@cmarinucci](https://twitter.com/cmarinucci)

Building homes, not a fortress, in Alameda

Chip Johnson

Updated 6:47 am, Tuesday, May 6, 2014

Measure A, a no-growth initiative approved by Alameda voters in 1973, is one of the last vestiges of a bygone era.

Alameda in 1973 had 71,000 residents and was 90 percent white. Notions of racial and ethnic diversity weren't central in public policy debate.

"This city has come a long way," said Alameda City Manager [John Russo](#). "There are people who still live here who believe the best way to preserve the Alameda lifestyle is to build a fortress, but the world is changing all around us."

Today, the city's population is 75,000 - and Asian Americans make up almost 30 percent, African Americans are 11 percent and the city's white population is just over 50 percent.

The change is also reflected in city government. Alameda's mayor, [Marie Gilmore](#), is an African American woman and three of its council members are Asian American.

Over the years there have been suggestions made in Alameda to pull up the drawbridges at night - leaving the Webster Tube as the only viable entry and exit point to the island. Three bridges connect the island city with East Oakland.

In the early 1990s, city officials hired outside consultants to investigate the [Alameda Police Department](#) after it was discovered that some officers sent racist messages to each other using their onboard computer messaging systems. And it's only been a little over two years since Alameda was sued for failing to observe state-mandated affordable housing laws, which requires cities to carry their fair share of affordable housing for a region's low-income residents. The city settled the suit and agreed to include a plan to make affordable housing available at Alameda Point, the site of the naval air station that shut down 17 years ago.

Fighting the lawsuit risked millions of dollars in state transportation and park funds connected with affordable housing plans.

Now the city wants to bypass Measure A to allow for the construction of more than 1,400 apartment units at Alameda Point. In order to do that, a developer would have to apply for a state exemption to local land use laws by including a certain number of affordable housing units as part of the project.

The project has set a goal of 20 percent affordable housing available to moderate, low-income and very low-income applicants.

The move signals changing attitudes in a city that for years operated more like a fortress than a city with free access to and from.

Alameda, founded in 1852, is one of California's oldest cities. It became an island when the estuary was created to make way for Oakland's first port, but it is inextricably tied to its Bay Area neighbors and responsible for providing its fair share of services, aid and shelter for the less fortunate citizens in the region.

Shelving Measure A as a restrictive land use device represents a step in the right direction, but the motivation for the policy change was not based on altruism, equality or doing the right thing.

It's about money, the growing demand for housing in Bay Area and the creation of new job opportunities for Alameda residents, a key ingredient for much-needed economic growth in the old Navy town.

"When Alameda lost the (naval) base, the city could no longer pay for the beautiful parks and beaches and amenities they have because there just aren't enough jobs to go around," Russo said.

"We are building 1,425 units, but this is a jobs center, not a housing center. The housing is the necessary amenity for the jobs that will be created."

Measure A should be viewed for what it is, a historic relic with little applicable use in modern-day city planning. What was portrayed in the 1970s as a tool to limit growth has been exposed as a thinly veiled policy that promoted exclusionary zoning and did more to keep out low-income and minority residents than it ever did to manage the city's growth.

Chip Johnson is a San Francisco Chronicle columnist. His columns appear Tuesday and Friday. E-mail chjohnson@schronicle.com

Bill seeks to ask motorists to fund bike trail improvements

Melody Gutierrez

Updated 6:25 am, Saturday, May 3, 2014



Bicyclists ride on Broadway at 20th Street in Oakland. A bill in the state Senate seeks to increase funding options for trails. Photo: Michael Macor

Sacramento -- California motorists could be asked to pay higher vehicle registration fees to fund trail and road improvements for bicyclists under a bill being considered by the state Legislature.

The bill by state Sen. Mark DeSaulnier, D-Concord, started out as a proposed tax on new bike sales, but that idea drew strong opposition from the California Retailers Association, antitax organizations and some cycling groups.

DeSaulnier amended the bill over concerns from retailers.

Now, the bill, if passed and signed by the governor, would allow local governments to put the question to their voters: Do you want to increase vehicle registration fees by up to \$5 as a way to provide stable and ongoing funding for local bicycle trails?

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association opposed both versions of the bill, saying most recently it is concerned California relies too heavily on vehicle registration fees to pay for projects. California's existing vehicle registration fee is \$46, plus \$23 to pay for California Highway Patrol officers. Local agencies can impose more fees, including \$2 for vehicle theft programs, \$19 to cut vehicle pollution, and \$1 to reduce abandoned vehicles.

"We would caution the concern of going to that well too many times and continuing to pass vehicle registration fees that in our view are very regressive," said David Wolfe, legislative director for Howard Jarvis.

Cutting car miles

Opponents of taxing bicycle sales said they saw the tax as a penalty.

"Point of sale on bicycles was a cause of concern among the cycling community because they see cycling as a public good, and why would you penalize or punish the cycling community at the sale of bicycles?" said Doug Houston, a lobbyist for the California Park and Recreation Society, which supports the bill. "There are arguments for and against that. ... Ultimately we were trying to get another mechanism that generates a lot more money and really has a closer nexus to trying to reduce vehicle miles traveled."

Permanent funding

Supporters of the bill characterize SB1183 as addressing some of California's most pivotal issues - health, environment and safety.

"Bicycle ridership is up," DeSaulnier said. "This has been a long desire for me that when the economy got better we should provide this infrastructure. The idea is to create a permanent funding source for this."

DeSaulnier said his bill requires a majority vote by a city, county or regional park district to place the tax before voters, with a two-thirds majority needed to pass. The bill is sponsored by the East Bay Regional Park District, which has 1,200 miles of trails throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The district estimates the tax could bring in \$10 million a year if passed by voters in their area.

DeSaulnier said he sees a need for a dedicated funding stream in San Francisco, where local agencies are reporting increased biking on city streets. A San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency study in 2006 counted 4,282 people bicycling at 21 key intersections in the city between 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Last year, 8,370 bicyclists were counted at the same intersections at the same peak after-work commuting hours - a 96 percent increase.

Cycling crashes also are rising. The transportation agency's most recent collision report found about a fifth of San Francisco's injury collisions involved bicycles, with 630 injury accidents in 2011 - the highest seen in the 10 preceding years.

'The need is there'

City officials have called attention to the benefits of biking to work, while acknowledging safety improvements are needed.

"This could be transformational for places like San Francisco," DeSaulnier said.

Same goes for the East Bay regional park, said Robert Doyle, the district's general manager.

"There are 10 paved trails under construction now," Doyle said.

The park district spends about \$6 million each year on bike trails, with that price tag increasing as new trails are constructed. One of the district's most popular trails - Iron Horse Regional Trail - connects thousands of bicyclists to 30 miles of paved trails across Contra Costa and Alameda counties. A 1.6-mile stretch from Santa Rita Road in Pleasanton to the Dublin/Pleasanton BART extension is expected to open this summer. The district plans for the Iron Horse trail to eventually reach 55 miles.

"The need is there," Doyle said. "It's our obligation to convince voters this is needed."