

TAX NEWS

Only a reduction in public indifference will bring about a reduction in government spending.

P.O. Box 2214, Mill Valley, CA 94942 • Tel (415) 456-7910 • Fax (415) 456-4198 • Fall 2008

Visit our website: www.marintaxpayers.org

Annual Meeting

WHEN: Sat., Oct. 25, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WHERE: Marin Republican

Headquarters

888 Fourth Street, San Rafael 94901

Parking: 2-story garage, Lootens & Third

SPEAKER: Joy Dahlgren, on SMART

MUTA recommends:

ON STATE MEASURES:

YES on only Propositions 2 and 11.

“No Position” on Props. 4, 8 & 9.

NO on Props. 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10 & 12

(Many of these just plain cost too much in this time of financial crisis in our economy.)

ON LOCAL MEASURES:

YES on none of the measures.

NO on Measures B & Q.

“No Position” on Meas. A, C, D, E, F & G.

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Director Vote—Dues Due

This meeting is when we would normally have our annual election of Directors. However, due to Board attrition by retirement of members, no directors are standing for election this year.

MUTA needs more directors. If you feel that your taxes are going out of sight and local government is not accountable, MUTA wants YOU to apply for a position on the Board. We need your help to monitor or speak at public meetings, to add your ideas and your expertise during our regular MUTA Board sessions. Please contact Fielding Greaves (456-4198) or Dennis Brown (472-7372) for more info.

It's also time now to renew your membership

in MUTA, and sign up a new MUTA member. Your dues statement is enclosed, together with a special questionnaire for you to complete.

President's Message

by Fielding Greaves, MUTA President

MUTA needs new members. Our all-volunteer MUTA board is almost overwhelmed by the many issues we face, such as: (1) The threat of the ill-conceived “SMART” rail line (Measure Q on the ballot. (2) Unfunded pension liabilities of county and cities, millions of \$\$ the taxpayers must pay in future years. (3) MMWD planned desalination plant, costing millions, with low public approval. (4) COM declining enrollment. (5) Immigration problems, and resultant impact on our infrastructure, bringing crime, disease, prostitution, and more traffic. (6) San Rafael's edifice complex, packing downtown with huge new office complexes, bringing more cars and traffic congestion. (See enclosed questionnaire that we ask you to grade and return to MUTA.)

These issues are but a few continuous areas that MUTA monitors. We need more members, able to attend the 10 a.m. Tuesday Supes' meetings, and a number of other municipal and special district meetings

Please call me at the (415) 456-4198, or e-mail me at fgreaves@netzero.net. There are so many ways in which you can contribute and help MUTA in its efforts to keep our taxes within reason and our elected and appointed officials honest, law-abiding and frugal with our taxes.

Marin United Taxpayers Assn.
Post Office Box 2214
Mill Valley, CA 94942

The SMART train

(Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit)

by Dennis Brown, MUTA Secretary

Why is it so easy for the bureaucracy to continue to expect the taxpayers to foot the bill? This bill is once again *not* a well planned or well engineered scheme for a train driven by a diesel truck engine.

Historically, train systems that work best are in high density, large metropolitan areas: New York City, Boston, Philadelphia or Chicago, with daily ridership in tens of thousands. SMART's most optimistic daily ridership is in the single digit thousands.

Why must all we taxpayers (bicycle users or not) be tapped for an elite, sparsely used and possibly hazardous (within 15 feet of train tracks) bicycle path? Think of the lawsuits after the first incident. The Federal Railway Authority (FRA) recommends 100 feet of separation for adjacent bicycle paths.

The majority of passenger train systems in the United States require subsidies, local, state and federal, as would the SMART system from all sources. Depending upon the economic climate these subsidies can be decreased, but then who pays? Would you believe – THE TAXPAYER.

Is there a better way and more convenient for the rider to commute? Obviously! Already mostly funded, already underway with widened, faster, higher capacity freeways, we shall have subsequent efficient service taking riders from where they are to where they wish to go, all without multiple transfers.

We are 'smart'! We do not need to burden ourselves with more than 20 years of increased taxes for an inflexible system, serving the minority, and that "goes neither here nor there."

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"A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul."

—George Bernard Shaw

The MGH election

by Fielding Greaves, MUTA President

Marin General Hospital is finally going to be returned to the District (i.e., the taxpayers), so that Sutter will stop siphoning off millions from MGH to use for their huge CEO salaries and support their less viable other enterprises. Last year alone, Sutter took \$38 million from MGH! However, we are now faced with an election where we have (1) Dr. Ramirez and Dr. Parnell who want assured accountability and transparency of public expenditures, and to reward improvement in quality of care, as well as to bring in renowned UCSF doctors and technical support, versus (2) the Sutter support-ed candidates, Jackson and Simmonds, who want to give control of MGH to yet another private corporate board. That new board includes doctors with lucrative contracts with the hospital, i.e., financial conflicts, and others with financial contracts with MGH. Those doctors don't want "competition" from UCSF doctors, despite the fact we have a doctor shortage in Marin, resulting in higher charges to the patients by the few doctors that are here. Will those conflicted private board members operate MGH for their personal fiscal interests, or for the patients? We see what happened on Wall Street when there was no transparency.

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College of Marin

by Basia Crane, MUTA Vice President

COM is finally under way with its \$249.5 million modernization program. Work has started on the \$15.5 million Diamond PE complex, due for completion in Aug. 2009. Geothermal facilities to supply heat and air conditioning for new buildings were completed this summer at Kentfield parking lots and the fire road at IVC. The new \$15.7 mil. main building and \$9.1 mil. Trans Tech complex at IVC are projected for completion by fall 2009.

The present adequate, well built fine arts building at Kentfield, only 20 years old, is slated for replacement by a \$12.6 mil.

building by winter 2009-fall 2010. The new \$12.4 mil. performing arts building and the \$29.3 mil. Gateway complex are due for completion by spring 2012 and winter 2013, respectively.

Of the total bond money, COM has already spent \$45.1 million (17%) with the costs skyrocketing as multiple contract change orders led to a 4-year construction delay. There will not be enough bond money left to complete all of the above projects, meaning another major trip to the taxpayers.

COM is no longer in crisis over its accreditation. Its full time equivalent student enrollment (FTES), which was 4,278 in 2006-07, is projected at 4,424 for 2007-08, the increase made possible by counting ESL students. Sadly, though, COM is no longer the strong transfer institution of the past.

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“Government’s view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it.”

— Ronald Reagan

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Greener cleaner energy

by Don Erbel, MUTA Director

The Marin Clean Energy initiative for government control of our energy sources is an astounding push to spend taxpayer money to satisfy imagined guilt for planet damage. Marin County resources should be used for more critical issues. The Marin Clean Energy do-gooder focus is politics, not citizen benefits.

If Marin County initiates "renewable energy" projects, it will require outside expensive resources to exploit these complex technologies. Marin Clean Energy neophyte blunders may even slow down green progress. Since PG&E and others are already working on renewable energy, it would be more prudent to support them in research and development.

To conserve power and reduce greenhouse gases, individuals can lead the way. Government can make this easier by streamlining construction permits for installing solar panels or small wind towers. Individual homeowners can and are doing this with no need for a huge government structure. Simple conservation strategies, such as compact fluorescent lights or insulation can also save on power generation needs.

Marin County officials could help residents save energy and develop their own solar/wind projects and let PG&E use its expertise to develop renewable sources. The effort spent on Marin Clean Energy could be put to better use on county business such as roads, fire protection, employee pension funding and making operations more efficient.

For a reality check, you should examine www.marincleanenergy.info. You will find lots of skepticism and caution, not only from PG&E, but from the consultants who did studies leading to the County plan. The optimistic touting by Clean Energy proponents needs a realistic audit of the problem areas and cost/benefit shortfalls. Clean energy deserves a thorough public examination before our tax dollars are spent to implement a questionable project.

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Global Warming

by Dennis Brown, MUTA Secretary

The Greens are increasingly frantic around the world, over the opposition now being voiced against global warming, now being seen as one of the great hoaxes in modern history. The Greens have bet all on global warming as the reason for giving up long established sources of energy such as oil, coal and natural gas. The objective has been to slow everything that the modern world calls progress.

The greatest agricultural and mercantile economy to have ever existed, the United

States of America, continues to thwart its own growth by yielding to the frantic lies. The truth is beginning to emerge. An international conference on climate change refuted the pronouncements of the United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and disputed the lies of Al Gore’s famed but seriously flawed “documentary.”

The Space and Science Research Center stated that the warming that has occurred since the end of the Little Ice Age in 1850 was completely natural, i.e., had nothing to do with human or industrial activity. The center says, “The Earth has begun the next climate change.” The current warming period is not only at an end , but a distinct cooling cycle has begun and will bring “predominantly colder global temperatures for many years into the future.”

The global warming hoax has never been about the climate. It is about competing economic theories. “Socialism may have failed as an economic theory,” writes WSJ, “but global warming alarmism, with its dire warnings about the consequences to industry and consumerism, is equally a rebuke to capitalism.” Proposals in some nations for various taxes based on global warming are a form of fraud upon their taxpayers.

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Desalination boondoggle

by Michael Hartnett, MUTA Treasurer

This year’s dry spell and concerns over a water shortage are used by MMWD a justification to build a costly desalination plant. MMWD Manager Paul Helliker presents doomsday scenarios and urges the desal plant as reliable, inexpensive, and necessary. Don’t be fooled into buying this expensive insurance policy!

The plant will cost at least \$120 million to build and \$12 million a year to operate. The total cost will doubtless be far greater than that, factoring in likely cost overruns, bond interest, and rising energy costs. Our water rates could double or worse.

MMWD has taken excellent first steps toward conservation, but could do more. Encourage increasing the recycling of home gray water. Currently Marin reclaims less than one-fifth of its wastewater. Dredging our reservoirs would remove decades of accumulated silt and significantly increase their storage capacity.

Most MMWD board members identify closely with the environmentalist community, but desalination is more reminiscent with the “man’s triumph over nature” mentality of the early 20th century that resulted in many of our environmental problems. Desalination produces sludge containing PCBs, heavy metals, and other contaminants that have adverse effects on aquatic life forms.

Desalination is energy intensive, causing more greenhouse gases, and with “clean energy” likely unavailable, operating costs will hit ratepayers with a nasty surprise.

Development in Marin slowed 30 years ago when MMWD stopped issuing permits for new water hookups, due to the drought. Desalination would remove this impediment, potentially opening up new areas for urbanization—probably the impetus for desal in the first place.

Think this is impossible? Development interests have long been the biggest donors to Marin political campaigns. By a 3-2 vote, Marin supervisors opened up the flood-prone St. Vincent-Silveira lands to development. By a 3-2 vote other parts of Marin can be rezoned from agricultural to residential. The pretext for this would be “a lack of affordable housing.” Imagine our traffic problems then!

Don’t let MMWD pull a fast one. DEMAND a public vote on desalination. Then vote a resounding NO.

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**EMGAM
EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER**