

Point San Pedro Road assessment district measure passes in initial tally

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A majority of San Rafael and unincorporated Marin County residents living in more than 2,500 homes near Point San Pedro Road has apparently voted in favor of forming a special assessment district for median beautification.

Nader Mansourian, San Rafael's public works director, said a provisional count Tuesday afternoon of 1,901 ballots submitted to city officials indicates 61 percent voted for the 30-year, \$75 annual assessment. The city had mailed 2,759 ballots, Mansourian said.

The City Council has the final say on whether the assessment district will be formed and will vote on the matter at a special meeting at 4 p.m. Wednesday at City Hall.

San Rafael and Marin County first built the medians in 1969 but turned off the water during a severe drought in the late 1970s. When the agencies turned the water back on several years later, many of the pipes and sprinklers were broken.

A water truck traveled up and down the road and manually irrigated the medians thereafter, but officials eventually stopped that service too. The medians now are filled with weeds.

A number of residents spoke both for and against the assessment at Monday night's council meeting.

"Now is not the time to add more taxes to people who are struggling to get by," resident John Sanders said.

"A project like this that although it may have some good points to it, it's not a necessary thing for health and safety in our community," Sanders said.

Glenwood resident Joyce Siegel agreed, adding, "I'm on a fixed income, and if my taxes go up I would like it to be raised and go up for the schools, the fire department or the police department and not for an expensive landscaping improvement.

"My lawn doesn't look too good — it needs improvement," she said. "Maybe I'll get my neighbors and some friends out to sign a ballot so you can help make it beautiful. Does that sound ridiculous? So does this sound ridiculous."

But Merilee Colton, a member of the Point San Pedro Medians Committee — a neighborhood group that has been working on the project since 2008 — said claims that neighbors could simply take a weed whacker to the medians were uninformed.

"The liabilities are incredible," Colton said. "We just can't do it that way. We're stuck — this is the only way to improve the medians."

Andrew Perry, chairman of the medians committee, added that the tax only represents a small monthly fee and

would improve the neighborhood.

"This is a \$6-a-month charge, which is a rounding error on everybody's taxes," Perry said. "But what that \$6 buys is community pride.

"It will make good feelings for everybody, even those who are against it now will say, 'This is a good thing,'" he added.

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