

San Rafael council OK's mail-in election for Point San Pedro Road median beautification

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Ballots will go out Friday to San Rafael and unincorporated Marin County residents living in some 2,500 homes near Point San Pedro Road after the San Rafael City Council unanimously approved a mail-in election for a special assessment district that would fund median beautification on the 4.5-mile stretch.

If a majority of residents who return ballots by June 20 are in favor of the \$75 annual assessment, the City Council would take a final vote on the district two days later. The tax would last for 30 years, with \$46 going to service debt for the initial capital improvements and \$29 paying for maintenance.

"There is a school of thought that things like median maintenance or improvement should only be a city function, but we are aware in this era that there are limitations to what government can do," Councilman Damon Connolly said. "This represents a great example of a public-private partnership that can be duplicated elsewhere where appropriate."

San Rafael and Marin County first built the medians in 1969 but turned off the water during a severe drought in the late 1970s, said Andrew Perry, chairman of the Point San Pedro Medians Committee, a neighborhood group supporting the assessment district. 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, Perry said. The medians now are filled with weeds.

"Over the last 15 years, I've taken my own weed whacker and weed-whacked the entire 4.5 miles," San Rafael resident Dave Dempsey said. "I think it's a shame that a private citizen living in this city and county should have to do that himself."

An earlier effort to form an assessment district failed in the late 1990s after a majority of residents voted against it. This time around, Perry's group has been building community support by encouraging donations from as many individual residents as possible, going door to door and distributing 2,000 postcards and 500 yard signs.

"It's \$6.25 a month," Perry said. "There's two options: \$6.25 or zero. Zero gives us an ugly road that does not represent our beautiful area."

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