

# The Lookout



**muir woods park community association**

40 RIDGE AVENUE OFF PANORAMIC HIGHWAY • MILL VALLEY CALIFORNIA 94541

## PARCEL TAX PROs AND CONs: TIME TO ASSESS THE 'BENEFITS'

February 1994 Issue

### **GENERAL MEETING to Discuss the Parcel Tax—Combined with Spring Clean-up Day and Noon Barbeque on Saturday, February 26**

The next big event will be to get everyone out to help clean up the mountain on Saturday, February 26. We will need lots of hands and backs to help pile brush, cut broom, remove trash, etc. on this "spring cleanup of the mountain". Residents will meet at the Ranger Station near the Mountain Home Inn at 9:00 AM. A BBQ lunch will be served at the Clubhouse at noon for all club members. Following the BBQ will be a General Meeting conducted by Capt. Frank Neer of the Throckmorton Ridge Fire Station and Battalion Chief James Selfridge of the Marin County Fire Department to discuss the parcel tax.

*For more information call Peter Hindley at 388-7252 or Del Goetz at 388-8493.*



**Mountain Cleanup Day  
Sat., Feb. 26th**

**Meet at Mt. Home Lot  
9 AM to Noon**

**Noon BBQ for Workers  
Gen'l Meeting Follows**

### **ST. PATRICK'S DAY Party**

**Saturday, March 19, 1994**

**MWPCA Clubhouse**

**CORNED BEEF & CABBAGE**

**No host bar at 6:00 PM**

**Dinner at 7:00 PM**

**Entertainment at 8:00 PM**

**Contact Lynn Hindley for more  
information at 388-7252**

Below is a summary of the letter Del Goetz received from Chief Selfridge followed by the list of questions and answers prepared for Fire Staff to use in response to community questions. If you are unable to attend the General Meeting, use one of the enclosed forms to share your opinions about the parcel tax with the MWPCA Board.

#### **The Letter**

Concerns highlighted in Chief Selfridge's letter include the statement that without the fire suppression assessment our Throckmorton Ridge Fire Station would become a seasonal single engine station. Our first in responder during the non fire season would come from Marin City.

He also reminds us that the non wildland fire operation of this department (of which our primary first response is included) is heavily subsidized by the general fund. This means our primary protection is paid for by all taxpayers in the county, whether they benefit or not. In all other fire jurisdictions, the people pay for their fire protection separately, above and beyond what we pay at this time.

*Continued on page 2*

# PLEASE RETURN THE PARCEL TAX INFORMATION SHEET

He goes on to say that the mood of the Board of Supervisors (and the Fire Staff agrees) that this process of benefit assessment simply brings us on par with the rest of the county.

## The Benefit Assessment Funding Fact Sheet

Prepared for use by MCFD employees responding to questions from the public regarding this tax measure:

### 1) What is a benefit assessment for fire suppression?

As provided for in State law, a benefit assessment for fire protection is an annual charge on property owners that pays for fire protection services.

### 2) Why is a benefit assessment being proposed?

Fire protection is funded by a combination of sales and property taxes, state contract fees, and county contributions. Over the past two years, the State has permanently taken almost \$15 million in local property tax revenues from the County of Marin. Under State Budget law, this money was "shifted" in order to meet the State's commitment to fund public schools. This major funding reduction had a devastating impact on the county budget because approximately 85% of the budget is dedicated to "mandatory" state and federal programs (such as health and welfare services). Only 15% can be spent at the local discretion of your County Board of Supervisors for services such as fire suppression and prevention.

### 3) What will happen without the fire suppression assessment?

Approximately \$500,000 in budget cuts have been approved for the Fire Department, which includes closing the Throckmorton Ridge and Hick's Valley Fire Stations from October 15 - May 15 every year; reducing from two to one the number of fire engines at Throckmorton Ridge and Hick's Valley when these stations are open; and reduction of fire staffing at the Woodacre and Point Reyes Fire Stations. However, pending the results of the fire benefit assessment which is now being proposed, the Board of Supervisors delayed these cuts until June of 1994. If the benefit assessment is not implemented, the cuts will take effect at that time. Results of the cuts will include higher response times to emergencies involving life and death and the destruction of property when time is of the essence.

### 4) Can the benefit assessment be used for other purposes?

No. the law requires that benefit assessment revenue be used solely for fire suppression and protection in the district where raised.

### 5) How will I be billed for the benefit assessment?

The benefit assessment will be identified separately and appear on your property tax bill, and will be collected along with your property taxes.

### 6) Will the assessment remain constant?

Yes. The assessment amounts listed on the reverse of this notice are maximum amounts that may be collected. The benefit assessment would be in effect for four (4) fiscal years and terminates after Fiscal Year 1997-98.

### 7) How is a benefit assessment implemented?

The Board of Supervisors can only implement a benefit assessment after property owners are notified and a public hearing is held.

### 8) Are there exemptions or deferrals?

Yes. Some senior or disabled individuals may defer assessments until they sell their property. For information, contact the California State Controller's Office at 1-800-952-5661.

### 9) How are protests submitted?

If you wish to file a legal protest you must do so in writing, identifying yourself and your property by 11:00 a.m. on March 15, 1994 at Room 311, Marin County Civic Center, San Rafael, CA 94903. If written protest exceeds 10% of the total amount of expected revenue voter approval must be obtained before any assessment can be made. If written protest exceeds 50%, no assessments can be made as part of the proceedings and service reductions will have to be made.

### 10) What happened to the money obtained from the 1/2 cent sales tax (Prop. 172)?

The \$600,000 appropriated to the fire department was used to restore the Marin City and Tomales Fire Stations. The budget shortfall is greater than the amount received from Prop. 172.

### 11) What is keeping us funded currently?

We received \$142,000 from the BMW lawsuit settlement which will keep us funded through June.

### 12) What is this tax really going to cost the property owner?

Unimproved parcel - \$38  
Living Unit - \$76  
Commercial - \$114

### 13) How much is a rancher going to pay?

Unimproved parcel - \$38  
Living Unit - \$76  
(dairy, houses, etc.)



FILL OUT AND RETURN THE DISASTER REGISTRY FORM

## **MUIR WOODS PARK COMMUNITY ALERT: Parcel Tax Measure Pros and Cons**

The MWPCA has long fought to establish, support and maintain a year-round fire station at Throckmorton Ridge. For decades this station and its staff have been a mainstay of the community's fire and paramedic safety, something we greatly appreciate. In 1993 many club members showed up in force at the Board of Supervisor's chambers to insist that the station continue in its essential role of community and park land fire and paramedic safety. Everyone on the MWPCA Board of Directors concurs that we must press the county to keep our station open, fully equipped and fully staffed with structural fire fighters and paramedics.

However, budget pressures from the State have again forced the county to look for ways to raise revenues for ongoing services. Since more and more tax moneys are being diverted out of the county each year, the Board of Supervisors voted on January 25, 1994, to propose another parcel tax on property owners to raise revenues for the purposes that our existing property taxes have always covered.

The MWPCA Board has had spirited discussions as to the best response to this. We suggest three alternative approaches for you to consider in responding to the county on this matter.

### **1. Take no action and let the Board of Supervisors impose the parcel tax on owners of both improved and unimproved property.**

**Pro:** The Board of Supervisors has already decided what they want to do. Given the inevitability of this tax, why take the time and effort to object to them raising the money to keep our fire stations open?

**Con:** If owners of less than 10% of the assessed value in the effected districts object to tax, the Board of Supervisors can impose the parcel tax without even placing it on the next ballot. This sends the message to our political representatives that we are a passive lot who care not how many times they propose to raise our property taxes or our priorities for where these should be spent.

### **2. Publicly support the Board of Supervisors in imposing this parcel tax.**

**Pro:** We should do nothing to discourage the county from keeping our fire station open. Instead, we should work with the Supervisors to see how we can support them, as well as see what we can get in return. Much of the county is already paying more taxes for emergency services via special district tax assessments. It is only fair that everyone be paying their share in this manner rather than tapping the general funds of the county.

**Con:** This sends the clear message to the country politicians that they can count on getting away with diverting tax revenues to budget items lacking popular support and then turn

to the property owners for more taxes to pay for the core property services of fire protection and emergency services. They obviously think we taxpayers would be most easily convinced to pay more to keep emergency services going than to ask us for more taxes for other county departments. They could use this political tactic in spite of the limits of Prop 13 to raise our property taxes again and again, confident that they would face no significant public opposition. The MWPCA Board has contacted representatives of the neighboring communities who would be equally effected by this measure and found no sentiment for such tax increases. The Board of Supervisors persistently ignores such information.

### **3. Formally protest the additional property tax by submitting the attached form letter with the required information to the county.**

**Pro:** This protest would make it clear to our elected representatives that property-related services should be the first to be funded from property taxes. Raising taxes to charge us again for something we have already paid for is unacceptable to many of us. If at least 10% of the property in the assessment district is submitted in protest, the county will be forced to place the question on the ballot. Once it is on the ballot, all effected voters can decide whether to vote for or against the assessment. Remember, just because you sent in a protest form does not mean that you cannot decide to vote for the assessment in the privacy of the voting booth. At very least, forcing our County Supervisors to make the issue highly visible to the public will put them on notice that if they ignore a sizable proportion of the citizens on such vital matters, they know that they may expect a lot less support the next time they run for reelection.

**Con:** If the owners of more that 50% of the effected property, by valuation, oppose the tax it would not be placed on the ballot. Even if it were placed on the ballot it might be defeated. This could be disastrous, since for over a year the Supervisors have proposed to close our Throckmorton Ridge Station from October 15 through May 15. If they were to lose in this matter, they may carry out this threat as a political gesture to those who opposed them. The tax assessment of \$76 per living unit and \$38 per unimproved parcel is certainly not worth the risk with our essential county services.

There you have it. You decide what you want to do as property owners and voters.

We would also like to take a sounding on your conclusions. We would appreciate it if you could fill out the form telling us which approach you are in favor of with a short comment as to why. This will help your MWPCA Board in the coming months as events unfold. Just mark your preference, fold and stamp it, and send us your opinion.

If you are in favor of opposing the tax assessment (Alternative 3) you should fill out the form including your property description, sign it, fold and stamp it, and mail it to the county before March 15, 1994.

—Robert Rydjord, Director, Parcel Tax Committee



## AN OPINION REGARDING THE PARCEL MEASURE

Appearing in this newsletter you'll find a form letter to be filled out and sent to the Board of Supervisors to protest the proposed fire services assessment. A number of my neighbors and friends didn't know that their filing of this letter constituted a formal protest to the proposal, and that if a specific percentage of residents file the protest letter, the proposal will either be killed or placed on an upcoming ballot.

During the most recent MWPCA Board of Directors' meeting the subject of the assessment was discussed. We recognized we had not placed the issue before the general membership for a vote and therefore the association could not take a formal position to either support or protest the assessment. However, a poll was taken of those directors and members present at the Board of Directors meeting and the overwhelming majority stated they would pay the fire service assessment.

Randy Barrow, co-chair of the Public Safety Committee, stated he would pay the assessment and offered an explanation for his position which I thought summarized my feelings very well. Randy computed the cost of the new assessment (\$76 per residence) to equal about \$1.46 per week and felt this was a small price to pay compared to the anxiety, stress and danger alleviated by insuring the Throckmorton Ridge Fire Station remained open. He also objected to the fact that our property taxes were being misappropriated by the State, but felt that losing the fire station was too big a gamble for \$1.46 a week and that the passing of the assessment did not mean we would be prevented from continuing our efforts to confront the County, State and Feds concerning these issues. I couldn't agree more.

Here's some information you may not have heard. At least nine other jurisdictions are currently paying fire service assessments. This includes Alto Richardson Bay Fire District which has been paying \$265 per residential unit for years. Marinwood CSD Fire has been paying \$227, City of Belvedere \$182, Kentfield Fire District \$114, Bolinas Fire Protection District \$79, and Tiburon Fire Protection District resident have been paying \$75.

Unlike a tax, this proposed assessment would be dedicated *only to fire services for this specific district*. The money cannot be spent on other services. The proposed assessment is for a period of four years only and, while it can be decreased or dropped during those four years, it cannot be increased. Marin County Fire Chief Stan Rowan has assured me that the proposed assessment will be sufficient to keep our fire station open for the four-year life of the assessment.

While most, if not all of us feel betrayed by our public officials

for putting us in this situation in the first place, there's a dividing line between idealism and reality. The reality of this situation is if the assessment does not pass, the Throckmorton Fire Station will close. If the assessment passes, we will be guaranteed no reduction in fire services for the next four years, enough time to make some changes in our county and state government, lobby the State and Feds to pay their fair share for fire services, and time to focus on other urgent matters. Yes, we are buying time. The clock on the mountain will keep ticking until the next fire with or without the fire station open. Don't gamble on the future with our lives wagered against \$1.46. Life is too precious.

—Jim Campbell, Director, Public Safety Committee

Public hearing on the parcel tax will be Tuesday, March 15 at the Civic Center. Please be there! Make your voice heard.



I want to meet all of you - please come to my office for half price, the first year. Enjoy the BODY WISDOM SYSTEM for every activity in your life - for energy or relief of pain.  
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EMPHASIS ON EXECUTIVE ANSWERING AND SECRETARIAL SUPPORT

## MEET YOUR 1994 OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

### Party Animal: Keith Papulias, Social Committee Chair

Keith has lived on the Mountain for over 10 years but came onto the Board in a big way about 2 years ago. He took over activities for the *Save Mt. Tam* Fund Raisers during 1993 and all of us have been VERY APPRECIATIVE.

It turns out his specialty is fund raising and his efforts have brought in thousands of dollars to MWPCA toward our fire safety. The great thing about it: Keith thinks all the hard work is fun! (Let's not let him know any differently....)

Keith was born and raised in Fresno and has a BS in Finance and Real Estate. Many of us here on the Mountain have happily used his services to finance/refinance our home mortgages.

Keith is engaged to Wendy Nelson (their wedding date is May 14). His hobbies include sea kayaking, mountain biking, and collecting antique toys. Something he's most proud of is mustering in the Eskimo Roll?!

In addition to chairing the major MWPCA fund raisers for 1994, Keith is in charge of the Social Committee with the help of Stella Winn.

### The Thinker: Robert Rydjord, Director

Robert is a long-time resident and member of MWPCA. He has lived here 26 years and has been a member for 24. He has served on the Board for the last 4-5 years. His main responsibilities are in Community Affairs—this year being very active because of the parcel tax issue now in the forefront of our safety concerns.

Robert has been here so long he was instrumental in the "down zoning" of our neighborhood in the 1970's. Imagine having apartments and a convenience store like 7-11 at Four Corners?! His efforts we can all appreciate and go on appreciating for years to come.

Robert was born and raised in Wichita, Kansas. No wonder he's so attracted to the beauty of our Mountain. He completed graduate work at UC Berkeley and has been involved in computer technology since the beginning.

His hobbies include photography and cinematography.

### Mountain Mom: Erika Teahan, Director

In 1977 Erika came to live on the mountain with her grandfather and took an immediate liking to its beauty and peacefulness. She's lived here ever since. Having grown up in a variety of places like Japan, Syria, Lebanon, and San Francisco (as well as Marin), she has a real basis for knowing where she'd like to be.

All the travel gave Erika the opportunity to learn different languages. In fact, she received her BA from UC Berkeley and her MA in French at San Francisco State. Along with backpacking, swimming and Yoga meditation, learning languages (including Hindi) is one of her hobbies. Erika is married and the proud parent of Colin Joseph, aged 18 months. He has been a source of unending joy to her and husband Pat.

Erika has served on the board for a total of 4 years—both several years ago and now again for the second year. Her main responsibilities on the board are co-chairing the Parents Network which has been responsible for bringing together the parents and small children here on the mountain.

## CURRENT REAL ESTATE LISTINGS

Thanks to Kathleen Delehanty of Prudential California Realty for this update of listings on the mountain. For more details just call Kathleen at home office 388-4516 or business office 383-6350. For current interest rates, call Keith Papulias at 388-9219.

Active Listings			
5 Muir Avenue	1br	1.5ba	235,000
2 Sunrise Avenue	2 br	2 ba	349,000
130 Sunnycrest	3 br	2 ba	495,000
475 Edgewood	3 br	3.5 ba	639,000
1040 Edgewood	3br	2.5ba	1,495,000

Pending			
4 Muir Woods Trail	3 br	2 ba	692,000
330 Panoramic Hwy	3 br	2.5 ba	1,495,000

Sold and Closed			
1 Marin View	4br	2.5ba	585,000

Lots—Active			
10 Ridge			175,000
328 Panoramic Hwy			259,000
1 Walsh Drive			374,000
000 Edgewood Avenue			400,000
Edgewood Lots 1,2,4,5,6			495,000-695,000

Lots—Pending			
120 Redwood Avenue			80,000

Interest rates may not be down much longer if the Federal Reserve Chairman has his way. According to Keith Papulias, if your fixed rate is about 7.375% or if your adjustable rate mortgage is above 5% you may be able to reduce your mortgage payments considerably with a no-point no-closing-cost loan. No-cost fixed-rate loans range between 7.25% to 7.5% and no-cost adjustable rates are between 3.875% and 4.375%. Call Keith if you have any questions at: 388-9219.

### 1994 Officers & Board Members

Public Safety Co-Chair	Randy Barrow	381-6634
Public Safety	James Campbell	381-8430
Secretary, Newsletter,		
Public Safety Co-Chair	Lila Daniels	383-8244
Treasurer & Finance	Clif Davenport	383-3892
Membership	Kathleen Delehanty	388-4516
President	Del Goetz	388-8493
Clubhouse Maintenance	Barney Lenhelm	383-1447
Social	Keith Papulias	388-9219
Community Affairs	Bob Rydjord	388-3621
Parents Network	Erika Teahan	388-1122
Emergency Team Network	Dirk Van Waart	383-0843

### Standing Committees

Cancer Cluster Study		
Chairman	Jim Bramell	388-6176
Parents Network	Beth Popson	383-9127
Past President, Public Safety	Dick Popson	383-9127
Social Committee Coordinator	Lynn Hindley	
Disaster Registry	Virginia Soper	383-1941
Newsletter	Alison Shapiro	383-5282
Grasslands Restoration	Peter Hindley	388-7252
Social	Stella & Howard Winn	388-3394
Newsletter Layout	Gari Thompson	383-4566
MWPCA Clubhouse	Peter Cunningham	383-9955

## MWPCA 1994 Clubhouse Calendar

### February

- 26 Mountain Brush Pull/Noon Barbeque/  
General Meeting—Re: Property Tax  
26 (evening) Tam Conservation Club dinner

### March

- 6 Gari Thompson (classes)  
12 Nancy Skinner  
19 St. Patrick's Day Dinner/General Meeting

### April

- 2 Ruth Bramell  
3 Easter Sunday Hike & Picnic at Divide  
Meadow  
6 Board Meeting  
10 Ferena Chinourd  
16/17 Mountain Emergency Team (MET) Training  
22 General Meeting: Fire Safety  
23 Caroline Alexander (wedding)

### May

- 4 Board Meeting  
7 Turnaround Dinner  
30 Mill Valley Week End Parade & MWPCA  
BBQ booth fundraiser in the park

- June 12 Pancake Breakfast  
Aug. 13 Potluck Dinner  
Oct. 15 Big Octoberfest Fundraiser  
Nov. 11 Annual Meeting Election Potluck Dinner  
Dec. 11 Christmas Party  
Dec. 18 Children's Party

## 1994 DUES

It's now time to pay your  
**DUES FOR 1994**  
**MEMBERSHIP:**  
\$35 / regular  
\$10 / senior citizens

## NEW CLUBHOUSE RENTAL POLICY

We have a wonderful meeting facility that many people would like to use. Our purpose in having and maintaining this space is to have it available for Club activities and for activities which generally provide a service to our members and community. Due to the increased demand on the use of our space by various people unrelated or minimally related to the Club, the Board decided to revise our policy for renting the Clubhouse as follows:

### 1. There will now be 3 categories of renters:

- a: Working Members—persons who have been dues-paying members of the MWPCA for at least two years and have performed at least 24 hours of volunteer work on behalf of MWPCA during those two years
- b: Non-profit organizations
- c: All others, including both non-members and members who are not working members.

2. Rental Rates: The rental rates will be generally per the table below, but are subject to change, from time to time, at the Board's discretion.

### BASIC RATES - quoted in Dollars per Day

	Week Days	Weekend Days
<b>WORKING MEMBER RATE:</b>		
Group of 30 or less	50	85
Group of more than 30	75	125
<b>NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION:</b>		
Group of 30 or less	75	175
Group of more than 30	150	250
<b>ALL OTHERS:</b>		
Group of 30 or less	100	300
Group of more than 30	200	450

For rental information please call Clif Davenport at 383-3892.

### FOR RENT FROM THE ASSOCIATION

Weed wrenches: Rates: \$5 first day; \$2.50 each additional day; \$15/week; maximum rental period is 2 weeks. Call Virginia Soper at 383-1941.

Field meter is available to measure electro-magnetic fields. Contact Jim Bramel at 388-6176.



## President's Letter:

This issue of the *Lookout* is a fat one filled with forms and coupons to return. We hope the bulk doesn't intimidate you and that you will *R-E-A-D* this issue. It is possibly the most important issue of the *Lookout* this year.

Why, you ask? Because it deals with the very gut issues of our survival on this mountain. What happens if there's a fire or other disaster? Who's going to know what to do and how to help? You're the one that needs to know. So we need you to participate in the Mountain Emergency Team.

The people on St. Jude had participated in a community organizing meeting hosted by *Marge Priest* just 2 weeks before 10 St. Jude burned down. She and the other neighbors are to be congratulated for their quick response in helping fire victims. They had their act together. Will the rest of us be able to respond as effectively if there's a crisis on our street?

We need to pull together if we are to help ourselves. So, please fill in the Disaster Registry Form and return it with your commitment to the Mountain Emergency Team now.

We also need to think about the quantity and quality of our fire and paramedic service -- as well as the cost. Most people I have talked with are furious that the Board of Supervisors would try to impose a tax without putting it on the ballot. And, unless 10% of the property owners send in a protest letter (copy enclosed) that's what will happen. Additional taxes to pay for services we've already been taxed for doesn't set well with the taxpayer. We need to get the issue on the ballot and have public discussion about the cost and benefits.

While our Board is clearly divided on the issue of the property tax, other West Marin organizations are actively pushing for its defeat. They don't benefit if our station is kept open at their expense.

Residents in the St. Jude area were horrified by the early AM fire. What would have been different if the response teams were solely from Marin City and Mill Valley and Throckmorton Ridge wasn't in business? Would anything have been any different?

Residents say that the big difference would have been if the fire occurred two weeks earlier when it was so dry. We need to play out the "what if" scenarios and make our decisions based on reason rather than fear.

-- Del Goetz



## MOUNTAIN EMERGENCY TEAM WANTS YOU!



### When a disaster hits, will you know what to do?

If you're not sure, then sign up for the Mountain Emergency Team and find out. Each street should have at least 2 or 3 people who can direct neighborhood efforts in an emergency.

All that's required are attendance at two three-hour training meetings in the beginning and one three-hour refresher meeting each year. The time spent counts for community involvement discounts for clubhouse rentals.

The meetings will be held on Sat. and Sun. April 16 & 17, 9 am to noon. If you can't attend those dates, but want to be included, we will be scheduling additional meetings. For more information call Dirk Van Waart at 383-0843 or Kathleen Delehanty at 388-4516.

### Be prepared in an emergency. Sign up now!

Fill in the coupon on the back page of this newsletter and return it to the Association along with the Disaster Registry Form included in this issue.

### FILL OUT & RETURN THE DISASTER REGISTRY FORM NOW (enclosed in this issue)

### SIGN UP FOR THE MOUNTAIN EMERGENCY TEAM on the form below:

#### MOUNTAIN EMERGENCY TEAM SIGN-UP FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: \_\_\_\_\_

Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_ evening phone \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: MWPCA, 40 Ridge Ave., Mill Valley, CA 94941



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Del Goetz



**\* 1994 DUES ARE DUE \***



Bulk Rate

# The Lookout

**muir woods park community association**  
40 Ridge Avenue  
Mill Valley, CA 94941

Address Correction Requested