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# Editorial: Vote yes on Measure A for Tam Union High School District facilities



The Tamalpais Union High School District office in Larkspur, Calif., on Wednesday, Aug. 2, 2023. (Sherry LaVars/Marin Independent Journal)



By **MARIN IJ EDITORIAL BOARD**

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On March 5, voters will be asked to pass Tamalpais Union High School District's Measure A capital bond measure.

Yes, another local school tax.

Tam District voters see more than others because they have a high school district as well as their local elementary school district.

Over the years, district voters have generously passed parcel taxes and capital bond measures for both levels – to protect school budgets from the politics and variables of the state budgets and to repair and modernize their aging campuses.

These are locally controlled tax dollars going for local kids' education.

In the case of capital bonds, the proposals pay for buildings and facilities that will be part of the education of generations of local kids.

Measure A is a \$517 million bond measure that needs a 55% majority to pass. It would impose a tax of \$30 per \$100,000 of the assessed tax value – not the current market value – on property in the district. The district estimates that equation will come to an average annual payment starting at about \$300 per year. Unlike parcel taxes, seniors cannot be exempted from bond measure taxes.

The district's three largest campuses are Tamalpais, Redwood and Archie Williams. Redwood High School, the "newest" and largest of the three, is more than 65 years old.

It's time to fix leaky roofs and way past time to replace portable classrooms that have been used for years across all of the district's five campuses, including the much smaller Tamiscal and San Andreas alternative schools.

Yes, it's also time to upgrade Redwood's covered eating area. It needs to be replaced with a new complex. The state's new mandate that public schools provide students – not just needy students – with free nutritious breakfasts and lunches has created a growing need for more kitchen space and more space for queuing students and seating.

Redwood's Measure A improvements will also include building new music and art classrooms, replacing the aging portables they now use.

At Tam High, the measure calls for building a new three-building complex for science, technology, engineering, arts and math programs and an updated music center and auto shop.

The bottom line is you want your local schools to look and function in a way that reflects the high priority you place in educating our youth. Campuses should be up to date in meeting building, plumbing and safety codes and aren't equipped to meet modern educational requirements.

The last capital bond was in 2006. Most of that money went to rebuild Tam High's Keyzer Hall, the campus' largest classroom building that had to be torn down and rebuilt because of drainage problems and high levels of black mold.

Those kinds of projects and significant capital improvements – modernizing classrooms, replacing old swimming pools – made to other district campuses with the 2006 bond weren't going to get done within the district's yearly budget.

That's why – 18 years later – the district is back with Measure A. It tackles work that needs to be done to make the district's five campuses better environments for learning, safer and comfortable for students and faculty and equipped for today's needs, not those in 1960.

The quality of Tam district schools – their reputation for academic quality – is reflected in local home values.

The focused opposition led by Marin's Coalition of Sensible Taxpayers, however, has labeled the measure “pork-laden spending,” including what it calls a “nonessential gold-plated cafeteria.” The district should focus its spending on improving educational achievement, especially in closing achievement gaps among Black and Latino students and their White and Asian peers, COST says.

Having public school classrooms and campus facilities that are safe, comfortable, well equipped, up to date and in good repair is important for every student's education.

District leaders have been working on this measure for more than three years, preparing studies and holding numerous community meetings to build a consensus.

The Marin IJ editorial board recommends passage of the Measure A bond measure.

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