



STAFF REPORT

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Andrew Poster, Director of Public Works
Tom Welch, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Municipal Service Tax Annual Report

DATE: September 17, 2018

Approved for Forwarding:


James C. McCann, City Manager

1 **Issue:** Municipal Service Tax Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2017/2018

2

3 **Recommendation:** Receive Report

4

5 **Background:** In the 1980s, the Mill Valley City Council determined that existing City
6 revenues could not adequately fund street repairs and began to look for additional sources
7 of revenue, deciding on a Municipal Service Tax (MST) as the desired source of
8 additional funds. Voters approved the MST at \$145 per parcel in 1987, with the MST
9 attaining the required two-thirds support of those voting. Voters renewed the MST in
10 1997 at \$145 per parcel and again in 2006 at a maximum of \$195 per parcel.

11

12 In 2016, Mill Valley voters approved the formation of Community Facilities District No.
13 2016-1 to levy a Special Tax to provide funding for fire prevention and street
14 rehabilitation services. The Special Tax was set at \$266 per occupied single family
15 residential unit. The tax has a 2% annual inflator. The tax has a 10 year lifespan which
16 began in the 2017/2018 fiscal year and expires following fiscal year 2026/2027.

17

18 The funds generated by the MST are to be used to improve the condition of City streets,
19 to reduce fire hazards, or to shorten emergency response times.

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20 MST funds cannot be used for general government purposes. The money collected is
21 restricted and may only be used for the maintenance of roads and fire prevention
22 activities.

23

24 **Discussion:**

25 The City Resolution forming the Community Facilities District notes that the City
26 Manager, or his or her designee, acting for and on behalf of the District, shall annually
27 file a report with the City Council as required pursuant to Government Code Section
28 50075.3.

29

30 In compliance with this provision, staff reports that the proceeds of the tax are applied
31 only to the specific purposes of the tax. A separate account has been created into which
32 the proceeds of the tax are deposited.

33

34 In 2017/2018 the MST generated \$1,595,424 in revenue, and \$1,173,818 was spent on
35 street improvement and vegetation management programs.

36

2017/2018 MST Expenditures	
Administration (MST Postcard)	\$4,781
Vegetation Management	\$352,794
Street Improvement Projects	\$816,243
Total	\$1,173,818

37

38 Historically, Vegetation Management expenditures have accounted for approximately
39 30% of the total annual expenditures. In the next two fiscal years, Council has allocated
40 approximately 42% of the MST to be expended on Vegetation Management. In future
41 years, the Vegetation Management expenditure is expected to return to approximately
42 30% of the total MST expenditure.

43

44 **Street Improvement Projects**

45 The following Street improvement projects were completed in FY 2017/2018 using MST
46 funds:

47

48 **Complete Reconstruction or Repaving**

49

Street Name	Begin	End
Lower Drive	Underhill Road	Underhill Road
Portola Lane	Eldridge Avenue	North End
Seaver Drive	Kipling Drive	Hamilton Drive
Stetson Avenue	Woodbine Drive	South End
Upperrhill Road	Underhill	North end
Miller Avenue	Sunnyside Avenue	City Limits

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	Resurfacing (Slurry Seal, Microsurface or Crack Seal)		
	Street Name	Begin	End
60			
61			
62			
63	Alvarado Avenue	Alta Vista	Sidney Street
64	Amicita Avenue	E. Blithedale Avenue	Sycamore Avenue
65	Cascade Drive	Cornwall Avenue	Marion Avenue
66	Cascade Drive	Molino Avenue	Throckmorton Ave
67	Cornelia Avenue	Throckmorton Avenue	Summit Avenue
68	Coronet Avenue	Eldridge Avenue	End of street
69	East Manor Drive	Alvarado Avenue	End of street
70	Elm Avenue	E. Blithedale Avenue	Locust Avenue
71	Hilarita Avenue	E. Blithedale Avenue	Locust Avenue
72	Juanita Avenue	Hilarita Avenue	Amicita Avenue
73	Locust Avenue	E. Blithedale Avenue	Miller Avenue
74	Oxford Avenue	Valley Circle	Surrey Avenue
75	Plymouth Avenue	Surrey Avenue	West end
76	Plymouth Circle	Plymouth Avenue	End of street
77	Presidio Avenue	Forrest Street	Millwood Avenue
78	Robertson Terrace	Area near 3 Robertson Terrace only	
79	Surrey Avenue	Sycamore Avenue	South end
80	Wainwright Place	Cascade Drive	West end
81	Walnut Avenue	Park Avenue	E. Blithedale Avenue
82	Willow Street	Miller Avenue	East end
83	Woodbine Drive	Eldridge Avenue	Coronet Avenue
84	Bay Tree Lane	Country Club	North end
85	Bigelow Avenue	W. Blithedale Avenue	Hillside Avenue
86	Bolsa Avenue	Hillside Avenue	Oakdale Avenue
87	Buena Vista Avenue	Country Club	Vista Linda Drive
88	Carmelita Avenue	E. Blithedale Avenue	Buena Vista Avenue
89	Cascade Drive	Marion Avenue	Laurel Street
90	Catalpa Avenue	E. Blithedale Avenue	Fern Avenue
91	Corte Madera Avenue	W. Blithedale	Gardner Street
92	Crown Court	Carmelita Avenue	End of pavement
93	Edgewood Avenue	Molino Avenue	Sequoia Valley
94	Elm Avenue	Locust	Sidney Street
95	Elma Street	Lovell Avenue	Throckmorton Ave
96	Fern Avenue	Locust Avenue	Sycamore Avenue
97	Hillside Avenue	W. Blithedale Avenue	Elinor Avenue
98	La Goma Street	Miller Avenue	Locke Lane
99	Lyon Place	Corte Madera Avenue	West end
100	Manor Terrace	Elm Avenue	North end
101	Park Avenue	Walnut Avenue	Miller Avenue
102	Sunnyside Avenue	E. Blithedale Avenue	Carmelita Avenue
103	Valley Circle	Plymouth Avenue	Sycamore Avenue
104	Locke Lane	Hilarita Avenue	Amicita Avenue
105			

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106 **Fire Prevention and Vegetation Management**

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110 With the passing of the MST, the funding for Mill Valley's Vegetation Management
111 Program increased from a onetime budget allocation of \$73,000 in 1997 to a regular
112 annual funding of \$300,000. The increase has allowed for a substantially larger number
113 of projects to benefit the City, while following guidelines set forth in Resolution 16-39.
114 Approximately \$1,000,000 was recently allocated over the next two years towards Fire
115 Prevention & Vegetation Management Program. These funds were applied to preventing
116 wildfires by removing brush and vegetation, creating fire breaks, and removing
117 approximately 368 tons of fire fuel from Mill Valley last fiscal year.

118

119 Since 1996, the City of Mill Valley's Vegetation Management Program has maintained
120 original vegetation projects as well as expanded into other projects that enhance
121 community safety. Vegetation management examples include:

122

- 123 • Large neighborhood chipper projects
- 124 • Wide area fuel breaks in Open Space preserves that surround Mill Valley
- 125 • Fire resistive demonstration garden
- 126 • Defensible space DVD played throughout the year at the Sequoia Theater
- 127 • Strategic removal of Eucalyptus trees. The Eucalyptus is then recycled and
128 milled for treads on Steps, Lanes and Paths projects
- 129 • Strategic removal of Pines, Acacia, Bay and other invasive trees on public
130 lands
- 131 • Vegetation reduction along the fire roads surrounding Mill Valley
- 132 • Creation and installation of fire road signage for mutual aid resources, hikers
133 and mountain bikers on all fire roads surrounding Mill Valley
- 134 • Development and delivery of public educational materials, poster boards,
135 newsletters and informational pieces
- 136 • Vegetation removed during monthly paved road fuel reduction projects

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- 137 • Hazard Assessment Program designed to assist residents who are threatened
138 with fire insurance cancellations. Approximately half of all insurance
139 cancellations have been reversed
- 140 • Partnerships in fire fuel reduction with external stakeholders such as Cal
141 Trans, PG&E, Marin County Open Space, Marin Municipal Water District,
142 Marin County Fire Department and Union Pacific Railroad
- 143 • Clearing of City owned property
- 144 • Delivery of regular and frequent National Fire Protection Association’s
145 Hazard Recognition in the Wildland Urban Interface class for residents
- 146 • Developed a defensible space internet based mobile phone application
147 allowing residents to determine defensible space zones on their property
- 148 • Creation of five nationally recognized Firewise Communities with more in the
149 works
- 150 • Construction of a mid-slope fuel break on Fern Canyon, Corte Madera and
151 Blithedale ridges among other locations
- 152 • Partnerships with Home Owner Associations to create Firewise Communities;
- 153 • Vegetation management of steps, Lanes and Paths (SLP) throughout the
154 community. All improved SLP’s are cleared twice a year so as to enable swift
155 evacuation by foot
156

2017/2018 Fire Prevention and Vegetation Management Activities	
Streets Participated in Chipper Projects	100
Streets Cleared of Encroaching Flammable Vegetation	123
Hazard Assessments Performed	237
Tons of Vegetation Chipped	368

157
158 In addition, multiple City-owned properties were cleared of flammable vegetation, the
159 City’s historic network of Steps, Lanes and Paths were cleared on a semi-annual basis
160 and work crews continued clearing the ridgetop fuel break on Blithedale Ridge. Fire
161 Department staff also hosted Firewise Communities and NFPA Defensible Space classes
162 at the Community Center.

163
164 **Next Steps**

165
166 City staff will continue to utilize MST funds to improve Mill Valley’s roadways and
167 reduce exposure to fire hazards. Staff is currently working with a consultant on the
168 City’s next pavement management program and plans to present the recommended
169 program to the Council this Fall.

170
171 Going into the future, the Fire Department will be using MST dollars to continue the
172 work thus far in addition to the completion of Fire Prevention Initiative 3 & 4.

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175 Fire Prevention Initiative 3 – Evacuation Concepts:

176 **Currently:** The City of Mill Valley manages vegetation at the edge of pavement
177 on primary and secondary evacuation roads.

178
179 Access and egress routes such as Cascade Ave and W. Blithedale have large
180 clusters of trees that delay emergency response due to the need to negotiate tree
181 obstacles. The trees are growing larger every
182 year, thus creating more challenges.

183
184 The age and design of current infrastructure
185 creates challenges for modern day fire engines.
186 The City Council supports the redesign of
187 problem areas to improve response times.
188 Recently, we completed an improvement
189 project at the intersection of Marion and Monte
190 Vista with several more in design and
191 development to include:



- 192
193
 - Marion/Hazel
 - Hazel/Rose
 - Lee St./Quarry Rd

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196
197 **Recommendation:** Expand/widen vegetation removal to include the entire City
198 right of way along evacuation routes. Tree crown spacing would be increased to
199 further disrupt the continuity of the canopy thus diminishing the opportunity for
200 sustained crown fires. The recommendations would come to fruition by
201 managing vegetation removal prescriptions along selected corridors key to access
202 and evacuation.

203
204 Accelerate the design and construction of fire access and evacuation route
205 enhancement projects with a goal to complete one project a year as
206 funding/logistics allows. Evaluate and develop a community supported plan to
207 mitigate trees that hinder access/egress on Cascade, W. Blithedale and other
208 critical routes. This would be done in a manner that balances community desires
209 while ensuring and retaining emergency access/egress.

210
211 Fire and Police departments
212 throughout Marin County and within
213 the City have substantial
214 plans/frameworks to conduct
215 community evacuations during an
216 emergency. The City of Mill Valley
217 has practiced these concepts for the
218 last 12 years by hosting
219 neighborhood evacuation drills.



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221 **Outcome:** Improved emergency response times and more effective evacuation
222 routes will result by creating larger vegetation buffers on critical routes, thus
223 enhancing our infrastructure capacity during an emergency response or
224 evacuation.

225

226 Fire Prevention Initiative 4 - Public Education:

227 **Currently:** The Fire Department conducts educational opportunities by way of
228 several sources, mediums and platforms. We have contemporary educational
229 content located on the City's website and have developed several videos that
230 focus on vegetation management and evacuation concepts for all residents. We
231 provide various mailings and have developed a smart phone application that
232 illustrates the processes home owners can undertake to improve their homes'
233 survivability. Finally, we offer/support several classes for residents throughout
234 the year to include the *Fire in Marin Class*, the National Fire Protection
235 Association's *Hazard Recognition in the Wildland Urban Interface* class and *Get*
236 *Ready*.

237

238 **Recommendation:** Mill Valley Fire and Police Departments would jointly
239 consolidate all educational materials associated with evacuation and vegetation
240 management into one City of Mill Valley Evacuation information pamphlet.
241 Separately, the Fire Department will continue to support the classes currently
242 offered. We will develop new programs that focus on structural ignitability and
243 residential survivability.

244

245 Continue with the plan to work
246 directly with neighborhoods on
247 preparedness, prevention,
248 evacuation and home survival.
249 This program will be a great first
250 step towards neighborhood
251 organizing, neighbors-helping-
252 neighbors and evacuation
253 concepts.

254

255 **Outcome:** Enhanced understanding of risks associated with wildfire throughout
256 the community. Improved clarity surrounding the responsibilities of the home
257 owner and that of the City.

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259 Fiscal Impacts

260 Detailed in the Staff Report.

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262 Attachments:

263 No attachments.

