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CO\$T Urges Supervisors Amend Proposed Building Fee Hike Ordinance

The Coalition of Sensible Taxpayers urges Marin County Board of Supervisors to reconsider the proposed building fee ordinance slated for approval on February 11, 2020.

Taking into account all the various permitting fees and add-ons (e.g., road impact and technology fees), Marin County is poised to win the race to the top of the pack of comparator jurisdictions in Marin and the South Bay. Moreover, elements of Marin's building fee proposal are poor public policy, particularly the big fee increases on projects that improve fire preparedness. We urge that Supervisors postpone a vote and direct staff to revise the fee increase proposal to take into account these concerns; eliminate the 1% road impact fee that, per our counsel, violates California's Vehicle code; more thoroughly consider the adverse impact on housing affordability; and develop a multi-year phase-in of all proposed increases.

CO\$T appreciates that, in response to our October 27, 2019 letter of objection, the County has now documented the cost of service for the individual proposed building fees as required by law (an analysis that was not previously provided for public review). This has reduced the proposed fee hikes on average to a still shocking 44%, from the previously slated even more startling 50-100%.

While we note that the average increase of 44% is still less than the original proposals, we continue to particularly object to big increases on categories of building permits that are most likely to be pulled in order to improve fire preparedness as requested or required by fire safety inspectors or insurance carriers. These include replacement of roofing, single pane exterior glass, and siding. High fees for electrical projects are also problematic, as that likely results in more unpermitted work and attendant fire hazard. At a time when fire preparedness is a major public safety effort, and when the county-authorized wildfire-responsive JPA is seeking voter support for a fire preparedness parcel tax, it is counter-productive policy and very bad optics to be raising the permitting fees on such projects. Furthermore, high and proposed substantially increased building permit and construction fees add to Marin's existing housing affordability problem.