



El Cerrito Democratic Club

April 2026 Newsletter

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ECDC
PO Box 192
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Helion

Newsletter Editor: Courtney

1. El Cerrito Democratic Club General Information

Since 1952, the El Cerrito Democratic Club (ECDC)—one of the oldest Democratic clubs in the state—has provided a forum for area residents to discuss and take action on issues and campaigns of local, national, and international importance. Our General Membership Meetings are open to all and usually held on the fourth Tuesday of each month except October and December, when we typically have our annual dinner and holiday party.

Our monthly General Membership Meetings are generally in a hybrid format accessible both in person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remotely via Zoom.

For monthly meeting and calendar reminders, you are invited to download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) invites to your computer:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZUpcOCvqDkpEtH10GiVZ7NcegZqDI_tJeMI/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGpqjwjHdKXsxGCRpwcBo_CXe3wpnpej7d1zU_CChZpNS31M-V4I5ZWL8z6

For those of us who've been able to come to Hana Gardens, it's been wonderful to be in community and gather in person. Whether you join us in person or by Zoom, we encourage you to come a few minutes early to mix-and-mingle with fellow ECDC members.

The El Cerrito Democratic Club and its activities are supported by volunteers and the annual dues of members. Please see the "Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions" section towards the end of this newsletter for directions on how to join the ECDC or renew your membership. El Cerrito Democratic Club executive board officer elections occur annually each January.

Special thanks to our 2025 volunteer officers:

El Cerrito Democratic Club Officers (2025)

- President – Neil Tsutsui
- Past President – Champagne Brown
- Executive Vice President – William Ktsanes
- VP Media – Madeline Kronenberg
- VP Membership – Greg Lyman
- VP Programs – Ruthie Abelson Olivas
- VP Publications – Courtney Helion
- VP Records – Leslie Reckler
- VP Treasurer – Ed Crowley

The specific duties of officer positions are described in section "VII. Officers" of the Bylaws posted on the ECDC website at <https://ecdclub.org/club-documents/>.

If you're interested in participating more actively in the ECDC, please consider volunteering with the Club and/or joining the Executive Board.

Help is always greatly appreciated!

Courtney Helion, VP Publications

2. Call for Candidates: VP of Membership – El Cerrito Democratic Club

The El Cerrito Democratic Club is seeking volunteers to run for Vice President of Membership in our upcoming officer elections. This is a key leadership role for anyone who enjoys outreach, organization, and helping strengthen our local Democratic community.

The VP of Membership's responsibilities include:

- Managing and maintaining accurate membership lists
- Accessing online voter information to support club activities
- Leading membership development and recruitment efforts
- Facilitating affiliation with other Democratic organizations
- Assist with the annual re-chartering of ECDC

To support your success, you will receive hands-on training during your first three months in the role, ensuring you feel confident and prepared.

This position is a wonderful opportunity to help grow and energize the club, connect with fellow Democrats, and make a meaningful impact at the local level. No prior board experience is required....just a commitment to our shared values and a desire to get involved.

If you're interested or would like to learn more, please reach out to Immediate Past President Champagne Brown (cbrownecdc@gmail.com) to submit your nomination.

Your participation keeps our club strong and thriving!

3. Information and Zoom Link for the April, 28th, El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meeting

Our General Membership Meetings are generally held in a hybrid format, accessible both in person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and via Zoom.

To join the monthly ECDC General Membership Meetings via Zoom, please use this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Zoom Meeting ID: 814 7976 2385; Zoom Passcode: c5fQKR

Dial In by Phone: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 408 638 0968;
Meeting ID: 814 7976 2385; Phone Passcode: 920761

Please note that the Passcode is different if you dial in by phone rather than join through Zoom.

April Meeting Agenda

April Meeting Agenda

6:20 pm – Assemble and Mingle, Zoom Logins

6:30 pm – Call to Order

6:31 pm – Review and Approve the April 2026 Meeting Agenda (Action Item)

6:31 pm – Review and Approve the March 2026 Meeting minutes (Action Item)

(Officer reports waived this month)

6:45 pm – Program – El Cerrito Measure C Library Initiative.

Guests: Greg Lyman and Wally Nowinski.

7:45 pm – Announcements (2 minutes each)

7:55 pm – Good of the Order

8:30 pm – Adjourn

Next Membership Meeting: May 26, 2026

4. March Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

President Tsutsui called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

Review and Approve the March 2026 Meeting Agenda

On the motion of Judy Jung and the second of Neil Tsutsui the agenda was unanimously approved as presented without Nays nor Abstentions.

Review and Approve the February 2026 Meeting Minutes

On the motion of Michael Fischer and the second of Dwight Merrill the minutes were unanimously accepted with the spelling correction of “Michael Fisher” to “Michael Fischer” without Nays nor Abstentions.

Officer Reports

- President (Neil Tsutsui)
 - Comments on the serious harms of Cesar Chavez and the ensuing shock. Acknowledges that our thoughts are with the victims and with Dolores Huerta. Bad deeds conducted by one person should not harm the farm movement or labor movement. Cesar Chavez’s name will be removed, but the farmworker movement should be remembered.
 - William will chair the April meeting in Neil’s absence. The topic of the next meeting is the El Cerrito Library initiative.
 - No Kings marches this Saturday in the East Bay. There are gatherings at Del Norte Bart Station 11-2, and El Cerrito Plaza 3-5 pm. Schedules are online. <https://www.nokings.org/>. Sign up or find a rally in the link.

- Executive VP (William Ktsanes) No report

- Membership (Greg Lyman) Absent No Report
- Media (Madeline Kronenberg) Absent No Report
- Publications (Courtney Helion) No Report
- Treasurer (Ed Crowley)
 - Cash Balance Balance \$3,310.80. The club is staying above \$3,000 avoiding monthly charges.
- Records (Leslie Reckler) No Report
- Programs (Ruthie Abelson Olivas) No report.

DPCCC report (Champagne Brown)

Received a presentation from Anamarie Avila Faria. The DPCC held endorsement meetings over the last two weeks. Board of Supervisors District 1. John Gioia running unopposed. The recommendation is to endorse him. Richmond - primary for city council and mayor primary in June.

Program – 2026 Endorsements

Unopposed Candidates Endorsements (Tsutsui)

Three statewide offices have unopposed candidates running. One local candidate that serves the El Cerrito area is running unopposed. The statewide candidates were endorsed at CADEM. Would ECDC like to take a vote to consider endorsing them. In order to do this, the club will need to waive the noticing requirement with a vote and then vote to endorse.

<u>CADEM</u>		<u>DPCCC</u>	
Secretary of State		<u>Contra Costa Board of Supervisors, District 1</u>	
Shirley Weber	96.99%	John Gioia	100%
No Endorsement/No Preference	3.01%	No endorsement	0%
Total			
Decision: Shirley Weber Placed on Consent			
Controller			
Malia Cohen	95.90%		
No Endorsement/No Preference	4.10%		
Total			
Decision: Malia Cohen Placed on Consent			
Attorney General			
Rob Bonta	97.50%		
No Endorsement/No Preference	2.50%		
Total			
Decision: Rob Bonta Placed on Consent			

On the motion of Champagne Brown and the second of Michael Nye, the club votes unanimously to suspend noticing requirements to endorse the candidates listed.

On the motion of Champagne Brown and the second of Michael Nye, the club votes unanimously to endorse the candidates listed above (Weber, Cohen, Weber, Gioia). All of these candidates have earned the endorsement of the El Cerrito Democratic Club.

Discussion and Hearing From Gubernatorial Candidates

Thank you to Ruthie Abelson for all of her work contacting the campaigns and organizing this event.

The following candidates appeared in person via Zoom:

Tony Thurmond, Antonio Villaraigosa

The following candidates had representatives speak for them via Zoom:

Betty Yee, Matt Mahan

Neil read short statements on the backgrounds of the following candidates:

Katie Porter

Former representative for Orange County

In 2025, ran for the US Senate and finished 3rd

Law professor and consumer protections attorney

Known for speaking to power with her “White Board”

The platform focuses on lowering costs, confronting corporate power and entrenched political interests.

Strong statewide name recognition from her time serving in the House of Representatives and her recent Senate race.

<https://katieporter.com/priorities/>

Eric Swalwell

Former prosecutor.

Currently Congressional representative for the 14th District. His work in Congress had centered on national security and public safety. He was prominent in the Trump impeachment. He is frequently a high profile media presence. His platform is focused on affordability and crime prevention. Endorsements: Adam Schiff, SEIU. Considered a top-tier candidate. Faced criticism from left and right. Alignment with law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Lack of executive experience.

<https://www.ericswalwell.com/>

Xavier Becerra

Served in the US Congress for 24 years, 1993-2017 representing the Los Angeles area. Vice Chair of Democratic

Served as attorney general for California, 2017-2021.

Secretary of Health and Human Services. Extensive services in the legislative and executive branches. Support from institutional networks and longstanding relationships. His priorities are healthcare, housing, fighting Donald Trump, affordability, clean energy.

<https://www.xavierbecerra2026.com/>

Tom Steyer

Billionaire investor and progressive environmental activist. Has not served in elected office. Has done a lot of political advocacy through NextGen America on environmental and liberal ballot measures. Running as an outsider funded by his personal wealth. The platform focuses on housing, closing corporate loopholes, affordability, education. Support for environmental and climate issues and economic justice. Endorsed by: California School Employees Association, California Federation of Teachers, California Nurses Association.

<https://www.tomsteyer.com/>

In Person:

Betty Yee

Sandra Lowe, Candidate Representative

Former State Controller, former Vice Chair of CA Democratic party. Running an underdog grassroots campaign. Individual donations not PAC donations. Highly qualified to do something about it. "You can't fix the affordability crisis without fixing the state budget."

Advocating for structural changes to the budget. New kinds of economies and funding such as split roll funding. The platform focuses on affordability, environmental issues, education, healthcare, housing.

<https://bettyyee.com/>

Antonio Villaraigosa

Former Mayor of Los Angeles, former Majority Leader and Speaker of the CA State Assembly. Reduced violent crime by 48%. He was nicknamed the "Infrastructure Czar" for all of the infrastructure projects in Los Angeles. Lowered emissions and balanced the budget with bipartisan support. He sees himself as a problem solver. The platform focuses on affordability, housing and infrastructure, creating jobs, green economy and zero emissions by 2045.

<https://www.antonio2026.com/>

Tony Thurmond

Current serves as California's Superintendent of Public Instruction, former school board member, state assembly member.

Running as an unapologetic progressive. Has worked to provide universal TK, free meals for all students, Prop 28 (arts funding), reading by the third grade, learning disabilities screener. Does not accept oil or tobacco dollars. Supports single payer healthcare including those that are undocumented. Supports wealth taxes on billionaires. The platform focuses on building two million housing units including on surplus properties owned by school districts. 10,000 homeless teens in the state and many unhoused. Tax credit to middle class Californians. Taxing those that own ICE detention centers and changing how education is funded.

<https://www.tonythurmond.com/>

Matt Mahan

Felipe Afanador, Candidate Representative

Mayor of San Jose, former San Jose City Council Member.

Priorities:

Ending Street Homelessness Reduced street homelessness by 1/3. Built short term temporary housing. Gave resources (counseling, job training) to get people back on their feet.

Housing - The cost of living is very high. Created comprehensive housing policies that unlocked thousands of units by cutting red tape. 1850 units have broken ground. Wants to speed up the process and cut the red tape. Is in favor of transit-oriented development.

Highest tax burdens in the country. Wants to create a public progress report card to track where the tax dollars are going. Is in favor of a back-to-basics approach.

<https://mahanforcalifornia.com/>

Comments

Some members of the club spoke about the risks of having multiple Democratic candidates running. The Democratic vote could splinter in a way that allows two Republicans to end up on the ballot for Governor.

Some members voiced that Democrats should rally behind Tom Steyer.

The club’s executive board will send out [OpaVote](#) ballots (link for information purposes only) via email to select a candidate for the club’s endorsement.

The club’s executive board will send an email with all candidate websites so members may further research candidates.

Announcements

Democrat Emily Gregory won a Florida special election on Tuesday flipping a state house seat that is home to Mar-a-Lago from Republican to Democrat.

Adjourn 8:03 p.m.

Next Membership Meeting: April 28, 2026

5. Results and the Redo of the Gubernatorial Endorsement

Big thanks to all of you who voted on our endorsement for the California Governor’s race! Overall, there were 124 members eligible to vote and 68 people voted (54.8% turnout). The threshold for us to endorse is 60%, and no candidate came close to that.

The results of our vote were:

Swalwell	26	(38.2%)
Steyer	15	(22.1%)
Porter	9	(13.2%)
Yee	9	(13.2%)
Thurmond	5	(7.4%)
Becerra	1	(1.5%)

Villaraigosa	1	(1.5%)
Mahan	1	(1.5%)
No endorsement	1	(1.5%)

However, there have been several big changes in this race since our endorsement vote. As you have certainly heard, Eric Swalwell has dropped out of the race and will resign his seat in the House of Representatives as a result of disturbing allegations of sexually predatory behavior across many years and several victims. More recently, on April 20, Betty Yee withdrew from the Governor's race and endorsed Tom Steyer soon afterward. Polling after these changes has shown a big increase in support for Xavier Becerra. Because the landscape has changed so dramatically, the ECDC E-board has decided to conduct a second endorsement vote for the Governor's race excluding Swalwell and Yee as candidates (and any others who may drop out before OpaVote ballots are sent on April 29). This question will appear on the same ballot as the Measure C Library Initiative endorsement vote, which will be open to members April 29-May 2, after the next membership meeting where the pro and con cases for Measure C will be presented.

- Neil Tsutsui, ECDC President

6. **April Program: El Cerrito Measure “C” Library Property Tax – “Yes” and “No” Presentations**

The El Cerrito Democratic Club (ECDC) hosts election year forums and issues member-voted upon endorsements for candidates as well as ballot initiatives. At the ECDC’s Tuesday, April 28th General Membership Meeting, the Club will hear presentations representing both sides of the Measure “C” library property tax proposal. Former El Cerrito councilmember and mayor **Greg Lyman** – lead organizer, author and proponent of the “citizen’s initiate” Measure “C” – will present his case in support of the measure. **Wally Nowinski** – community activist, Democratic organizer and opponent of Measure “C” – will present his case in opposition to it.

ECDC General Membership Meeting

Date: Tuesday, April 28th (4th Tuesday of each month)

Time: 6:30-8:00 pm (with the option of extending it to 8:30 pm); doors open at 6:00 pm

Location: Hana Gardens Community Room, 10860 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito, CA 94530
(ground floor of the room facing San Pablo Avenue)

Meeting Format: Hybrid; in-person and via Zoom;

<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

The meeting and presentation is open to all; ECDC membership is not required.

Presentation Format

After taking care of a bit of in-house ECDC business (including member approval of the agenda and past meeting minutes), we'll start the Measure "C" library tax presentations around 6:45 pm. Rather than a raucous back-and-forth "debate," we'll provide both Greg and Wally with time to calmly present their case and field a few questions.

Greg and Wally will each have three minutes to make opening statements, followed by another 15 minutes each to make their presentations. That'll be followed by a handful of questions. We'll wrap up around 8:00 pm with Greg and Wally having 5 minutes each to make a closing statement. If time allows, they may stay for a bit after the meeting ends to informally meet people, field additional questions and discuss the issues further.

To maintain fairness, I will curate questions in advance. You're encouraged to submit questions for consideration. Please email them to me at wktsanes@gmail.com by 3:00 p.m. on Sunday. To avoid blindsiding them with surprises, I'll provide Greg and Wally with a list of a dozen or so potential questions on Sunday evening (two days in advance of Tuesday’s meeting).

ECDC Endorsement Voting

Per ECDC's Standing Rules for Endorsements, an ECDC endorsement requires 60% approval from voting members. Members who are eligible to vote will receive an email from "OPA Vote" with a link to a confidential, online ballot.

To be eligible to vote in ECDC's endorsement process, an individual must be in good standing with membership dues paid at least 45 days before the membership meeting (not the election). As the meeting is on Tuesday, April 28th, dues need to have been paid as of March 14th (45 days before April 28th). Anyone whose ECDC membership is current and was a member as of March 14th is eligible to cast an endorsement vote, with voting taking place over five days from Wednesday, April 29th to 6:00 pm on Saturday, May 2nd. Results will be announced shortly thereafter.

Eligible ECDC members will receive an OPA vote ballot by email in which they can vote (1) for the Club to issue a Measure "C" library property tax endorsement as well as (2) a gubernatorial candidate endorsement (as mentioned above). Measure "C" options will include "Endorsement," "No Endorsement" and "No Position."

The next six pages include one-page flyers submitted by Greg and Wally along with reprinted editorials from ECDC members representing both sides of the Measure "C" issue.

– William Ktsanes, ECDC Executive VP and El Cerrito Councilmember

**Submitted by Greg Lyman –
“YES” on the El Cerrito Measure “C” Library Tax**

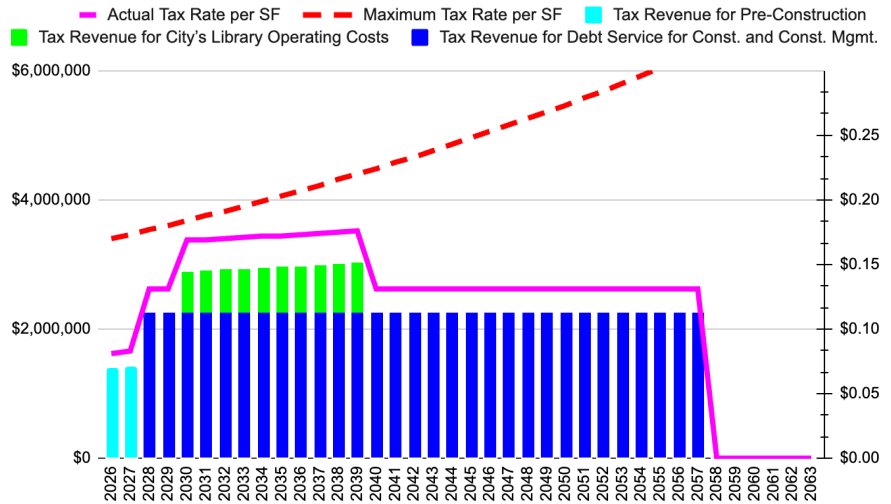
Understanding the El Cerrito Library Tax Measure

EL CERRITO MEASURE C is a proposed local parcel tax to fund a new or improved public library for the city. Its goal is to create a safe, modern, and fully functional library while providing a stable, dedicated funding source to build and operate it.

The measure would generate revenue through a tax on developed property (based on habitable square footage) and a flat fee on vacant parcels. Those funds could only be used for library purposes—specifically planning, design, construction, and the first 10 years of the city’s library operating costs (above the baseline covered by the county) for the new facility. By law, the money would be kept in a separate fund and could not be spent on unrelated city expenses like general administration or salaries.

Measure C does not lock in a specific plan or location, preserving flexibility. It funds opportunities and a public process to decide; engaged residents will

help determine the library’s design, location and services. Options studied so far range from renovating the current building to constructing a new library at different sites. Measure C keeps multiple paths open. If new information, costs, or community priorities make an option impractical, Measure C allows a pivot to a more feasible alternative without delays that increase library construction costs.



Why It Deserves Your Endorsement

THE TAX HAS a capped maximum and can only be adjusted for inflation within limits tied to economic indices – **and only if expenses rise**. The tax ends 30 years after bonds are issued, expected after two years of planning and design at a lower tax rate.

In the early years—when construction debt and initial operating costs overlap—the tax rate may be adjusted upwards to cover inflationary costs. But after the first decade of operation, operating costs are no longer funded by the tax, leaving the bond repayment, a fixed cost. **As a result, at this point, the tax will decrease—not continue rising—and then remain flat.**

Smart, Accountable, Time-Limited

MANY STATE, COUNTY, and federal grants require local matching funds. By establishing a dedicated revenue stream, the measure makes El Cerrito more competitive for those additional dollars, reducing the total cost to the taxpayers.

Oversight and transparency are built in. The measure requires independent financial audits and citizen oversight, and it calls for a public planning process so residents can weigh in on key decisions.

Measure C is about replacing or upgrading an aging library facility that no longer meets current safety, accessibility, or community needs—and doing so with a clear funding plan, public input, and long-term accountability. Our city needs this funding tool to build the library the community wants and deserves.

Your Tax Payments for \$37M Library					
	Tax Rate	1,000 Sq. Feet	1,500 Sq. Feet	Avg. 1,950 SF	2,500 Sq. Feet
First 2 Years	\$0.081	\$81	\$122	\$158	\$203
Years 3 to 13 (Ops Years)	\$0.131 to \$0.176	\$131 to \$176	\$196 to \$264	\$255 to \$343	\$327 to \$440
Years 13 to 32	\$0.131	\$131	\$196	\$255	\$327
Total Tax Paid over 32 Years		\$4,504	\$6,756	\$8,783	\$11,260

Please Endorse Yes on Measure C
www.anewelcerritolibrary.com

MEASURE C DIVIDES DEMOCRATS

This isn't about whether you like libraries. It's about whether Measure C is a good deal for El Cerrito. It's not.

Democrats can disagree on this plan.

Measure C isn't a referendum on libraries. The Stockton Street library we own and love stays open and County-funded regardless of this vote. The question is if this plan is a good deal for El Cerrito families struggling with affordability, and for a city facing many other financial challenges. A lot of Democrats think the answer is no.

A reckless bet on an arrested development.

Supporters claim this proposal is location-agnostic because they know the BART plan is unpopular. But we all know what the plan is. The City has been working on the BART Plaza library plan for years. It's in the City's Strategic Plan, and a Council majority has publicly supported it. We should take them at their word: if Measure C passes, the City will move forward with the BART TOD library plan.

The City acknowledges the BART TOD plan is a risky bet.

The problem with this plan is it ties our library to a risky project that may never be built. There's no real design, no construction funding, and no timeline for a groundbreaking.

The City's own 2019 library workshop identified the BART plan as risky because it tied the future of a library to an uncertain affordable housing development. That was before the Trump administration made that financing even more uncertain.

It's a risky gamble to effectively pre-pay a lease for a library on land we will never own in a building that may never be built.

The tax outpaces inflation by design.

The ballot question says the tax is \$0.17/sq ft, subject to annual inflation adjustments. What it doesn't say: the adjustment uses the greater of Bay Area CPI or California per capita income growth — whichever runs hotter each year. Over the last 30 years, that's averaged around 5% annually. This was written to let the City raise however much revenue it wants. It's not what voters were promised.

Neighbors For a Better El Cerrito

We're a grassroots campaign of people concerned this is a bad deal for El Cerrito — including professional librarians, progressive activists, former city officials, and many, many registered Democrats. We love libraries. We oppose this plan.

Important numbers to remember:

\$797K/yr

The operating-cost deficit the City projects starting 10 years after opening — assuming optimistic construction timelines.

~\$100M+

The total cost of this project per City projections — assuming everything goes smoothly and no tax increases (which won't happen).

0

Seniors in El Cerrito granted an exemption under identical language, despite City promises.

Seniors were promised an exemption — the fine print makes it impossible.

The exemption is contingent on two state programs, one of which is defunct and the other of which requires a lien. The City has acknowledged no one has received the exemption under current wording, which the city used for the pool tax.

Backers could have written the exemptions to automatically apply to seniors; they chose not to.

Check the facts yourself with original sources at www.nomoreforevertax.org/factcheck

Sources: City's \$9212 Impact Report (Feb. 2026), 2019 El Cerrito Library Workshop, and the ballot measure text.

El Cerrito needs a new library, Measure C can put it in motion

By Paul Fadelli. The author was an El Cerrito City Council member from 2016 to 2024. Before being elected to the council, he was manager of state and federal legislation for BART for 11 years.

This was originally published as an editorial in the East Bay Times and San Jose Mercury News newspapers and subsequently reprinted in the liveableelcerrito.com local news blog. It is reprinted here with permission from its author.

It's been 10 years since El Cerrito residents had the chance to debate and vote on whether they want a new modern library. Measure C, now on the June primary ballot, will allow a vote to replace its aging 76-year-old library.

El Cerrito's existing library is unsafe and inadequate. It can't offer satisfactory space or services that most other Contra Costa city libraries can.

In 2016, El Cerrito voters considered a \$30 million bond measure to fund a new library, but it fell short of the required two-thirds approval threshold. This time, proponents are optimistic: a successful petition-driven process qualified the measure for the ballot, allowing it to pass with a simple majority rather than a supermajority.

But passage again this time is not assured because a new library won't be cheap. With new local construction costs continuing to rise because of inflation, tariffs and supply route delays, a new El Cerrito library could cost as much as \$37 million, according to one estimate. And, in a time when affordability remains a real concern for voters, the measure will compete on the ballot with others seeking additional taxes.

Measure C would authorize an annual parcel tax up to 17 cents per square foot applying to all building types for 30 years. Residents with a 1,000-square-foot house, for example, would pay a \$170 tax payment through the county tax process. A 2,000-square-foot house would be taxed approximately \$340. Vacant lots would be \$100 a year. City Council could adjust tax rates annually based on cost-of-living indices.

But good things are worth paying for. The investment in our city is long overdue.

While Measure C doesn't require a specific library location, the City Council has supported building at the BART El Cerrito Plaza Transit Oriented Development (TOD) project now under construction. This housing project will build 743 rental units and, in coordination with BART's developers, a new 20,000-square-foot library with specific areas for seniors, teens, kids and community rooms for additional civic activities. Exciting too, its Fairmont Street border would undergo outside art and pedestrian-friendly upgrades.

Some have suggested that the BART location might not be the best. But with few other serious options in our city, it's an exceptional opportunity.

The TOD site will be a new population center next to the city’s biggest retail district. It would have easy access to bike paths, BART and AC transit bus connections. It’s near San Pablo Avenue, the city Post Office, Harding School, and the Ohlone Greenway. A library here would contribute to a new center of activity and much needed economic development.

Over the past five years, El Cerrito has worked hard to come back from the impact of Covid and fiscal problems which reduced staff and cut services. There is still much to do, but recent public financial reports show a city on the financial rebound with significant reserves. City Council members recently prioritized economic development to continue this financial recovery.

So, when we consider library costs, let’s remember that libraries are also community resource centers that ultimately provide an economic return on investment — including increased property values, job training and enhanced social services. It’s been estimated that every dollar spent on a library results in a \$5 return, and 23% more spending at nearby businesses.

The Plaza location is one of several locations to be considered if Measure C passes. Wherever a new library may finally be located, voting YES in June will say loud and clear that our community is willing to invest in and enjoy a new and improved El Cerrito.

And that optimism is well worth the cost!



Inside the existing El Cerrito library at 6510 Stockton Avenue; picture courtesy of Betsy Bashor and liveableelcerrito.org

Submitted by James Porter and Maria Pantelia – “NO” on the El Cerrito Measure “C” Library Tax

We Have Devoted Our Careers to the Pursuit of Knowledge — and to Libraries. That Is Why We Cannot Support Measure C.

By James Porter, Distinguished Professor and Irving Stone Chair in Literature, University of California, Berkeley, and Maria Pantelia, Professor of Classics and Director, Thesaurus Linguae Graecae®, University of California, Irvine. The authors write in their personal capacities and do not speak for their institutions.

An abbreviated version of this was originally published as a letter to the editor in the East Bay Times and San Jose Mercury News newspapers and subsequently reprinted in the liveableelcerrito.com local news blog. It is reprinted here with permission from its authors.

We have spent our careers in and around libraries. Between us, we have written about them, fought for their funding, watched them transform communities, and devoted decades to understanding what makes them thrive — one of us as a scholar of classical literature, the other as director of one of the world's great digital humanities libraries used by researchers and students on every continent. We know what a library means to a child who discovers reading for the first time, to a teenager who finds in its stacks a world larger than the one outside the door, to a family that cannot afford to buy books but can borrow them freely. Libraries are among the most democratic institutions a civilized society has ever devised. They matter — absolutely and profoundly across every measure of civic health.

Which is precisely why we cannot support Measure C.

El Cerrito voters will be asked on June 2 to approve a permanent parcel tax — indexed to inflation — to fund a new 20,000 sf. library facility whose details have not been finalized, at a site that does not yet exist, contingent on a BART transit-adjacent development that may or may not be built — all financed through thirty years of bond indebtedness. The city will begin collecting the tax in December 2026, but construction won't start for several years after that, and only if the project secures competitive state funding. Supporters are asking residents to write a blank check and trust that **the money will eventually be put to good use.**

A Citizens' Initiative Funded by Outside Interests

Measure C is structured as a citizens' initiative requiring only 50% + 1 vote to pass — a lower bar than measures placed on the ballot by the city itself. Yet the campaign behind it has been substantially funded by wealthy individuals with financial ties to the City who are not El Cerrito residents. This raises a troubling question: whose interests does this initiative truly serve?

The Structure Is Broken Before the Foundation Is Poured

The current cost of the space is \$37.2 million if building starts in January 2027 — a 75% increase from the 2023 estimated cost of \$21 million. For the average homeowner, this tax starts at roughly \$330 per year but, through its indexing clause could increase substantially over the life of the tax without voter approval. That is a staggering commitment to extract from a small city before a single architectural drawing has been approved.

The preferred site compounds the problem. The plan would lock El Cerrito into a 99-year lease arrangement at a BART Plaza housing development and would have El Cerrito effectively subsidizing a developer by building out 20,000 square feet of space when the city may need only half that or less. El Cerrito would pay perpetually for a building it would never own.

This Is Not What Modern Libraries Look Like

The library of the future is not a larger version of the library of the past. It is a porous, networked institution that extends its reach into communities through digital infrastructure, partnerships with schools, mobile services, and embedded community programming. It is built around innovative, future-oriented flexibility — not square footage.

El Cerrito deserves a library — one conceived with vision and care, focused on lifelong learning, digital inclusion, and social connection — not one whose design is dictated by the ground-floor commercial needs of a transit-adjacent housing developer. The measure as written does not guarantee a library built around community needs. It guarantees a lease.

Meanwhile, El Cerrito already owns its existing library building, and renovation or expansion plans were developed and costed years ago. Those options — less glamorous, less politically legible, but fiscally coherent — have been quietly sidelined. Other nearby cities (such as Kensington, Richmond, and Bay Point) have been successful in securing grants to renovate and expand their existing library facilities, delivering modernized, community-centered spaces without imposing open-ended permanent taxes on residents. El Cerrito was eligible for comparable funding but failed to apply.

The Fiscal Moment Demands Honesty and Trust

El Cerrito has already passed a sales tax increase in 2014, a transfer tax in 2018, a property tax in 2019, and extended a sales tax into a permanent tax in 2024. The city has a history of broken promises — targeted tax initiatives that never materialize; infrastructure projects, the senior center, and others left undelivered. Taxes were raised and revenue was redirected to the general fund to finance the city's structural liabilities. If the past is prologue, Measure C taxes will be spent on peripheral expenses — the June ballot alone will cost \$80,000 when a November ballot would have been free.

Residents are not opposed to civic investment. They are opposed to being treated as an inexhaustible revenue source while city finances remain murky, reserves continue to erode, and accountability mechanisms remain weak. Layering a permanent, escalating parcel tax onto that history — during a period of inflation, funding uncertainty, and a tightening California state budget — is not bold leadership. It is fiscal recklessness dressed in the vocabulary of community values.

Vote No — For the Library's Sake

Let us be clear about who we are and what we are saying. We are not fiscal hawks or opponents of civic spending. We are scholars who have spent our working lives inside libraries. We believe in them with the conviction that only comes from professional intimacy. That is precisely what makes our opposition to this measure so considered, and so firm.

We have devoted our careers to the life of the mind, and to the institutions that sustain it. It is because we know what libraries are — and what they can be — that we cannot in good conscience support this plan.

7. Summarising the County Measures on the June Ballot - John Gioia, District 1 Supervisor

Many thanks to John Gioia and his office for putting this together.

COUNTY MEASURES ON THE JUNE BALLOT

The Contra Costa Board of Supervisors has placed two measures on the June Primary Ballot: Measure A – to extend the successful Urban Limit Line through 2051; and Measure B - a 5/8 cent temporary 5-year sales tax to help Contra Costa County address cuts in federal funding and support local services such as health care and food assistance.

MEASURE A – Extending the Urban Limit Line

The Urban Limit Line (ULL), first passed by voters in 1990, has protected thousands of acres of open space and agricultural lands and successfully channeled growth into areas of the County most appropriate for urban development. Voters re-approved the ULL in 2006 and it expires at the end of 2026 unless extended again.

Measure A extends the benefits of the ULL through 2051, ensuring continued protection and preservation of open space and agricultural lands, and ensuring that urban development only occurs where public services such as roads, schools, police, fire, water and utilities are adequate to accommodate future growth.

Protecting our open space and agricultural lands, discouraging urban sprawl, and reducing future traffic congestion, are issues that matter to County residents. The ULL is a boundary beyond which no urban land uses can be approved. It has channeled investment toward existing communities where services and infrastructure already exist or can be provided more cost-effectively, while directing development away from areas unsuitable for urban growth.

Thousands of acres of vacant and underutilized land that could be developed with housing already exist inside the Urban Limit Line. Before destroying even more of our county's treasured landscape with sprawl, we should use this land within the ULL to provide housing options for everyone from young people to teachers and firefighters working hard for our communities, to retirees wanting to downsize. This is smart planning and is fiscally responsible.

MEASURE B – Temporary 5-year 5/8 cent sales tax to maintain health and human services being cut by the Federal Government

Measure B is a temporary 5-year 5/8 cent sales tax to generate about \$150 million annually to stabilize essential health and human services being cut by the Federal Government. Trump’s H.R. 1 and other policies significantly cut funding to healthcare and human services, including food assistance, and place up to 93,000 county residents at risk of losing their healthcare. Measure B exempts food, housing, prescriptions and medical care, and it cannot be extended by the Board of Supervisors. Measure B requires annual audits of revenues and an independent citizens oversight committee.

Measure B will help keep open Contra Costa’s Regional Hospital and its 11 clinics countywide (including two in West County). It will also allow the county to maintain crucial physical and mental health care that keeps people out of emergency rooms thereby saving lives, saving taxpayers money and helping prevent emergency response times and ER wait times from increasing.

The Hospital Council (which includes Sutter Health, John Muir Health and Kaiser) supports Measure B because the Federal cuts will also impact their health systems and they understand that more people may end up in their emergency rooms. The largest organization representing businesses in the East Bay – the East Bay Leadership Council – also supports Measure B because they know that our economy suffers when people lose healthcare and are forced to get their care in emergency rooms. Measure B is also supported by the Contra Costa Democratic Party and the Contra Costa Labor Council (representing over 85,000 workers in our county).

8. Future Events - *Mark Your Calendar!*

El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meetings and Events

ECDC April Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, April 28, 2026;
(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link <http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>
Monthly Program: El Cerrito Measure “C” Library Property Tax – “Yes” and “No” Presentations

ECDC May Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, May 26, 2026;
(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via

Zoom link <http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Preliminary Monthly Program: TBD

ECDC Executive Board Calendar – The El Cerrito Democratic Club’s Executive Board (E-Board) meets monthly via Zoom for about an hour to handle routine club business, plan programs for the monthly General Membership Meetings and discuss newsletter content. As with the General Membership Meetings, the E-Board meetings are open to the public. The Zoom Link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89264608412?pwd=c2sySEI5ZEplL1lHVUM5bERCZGpEQTO9>.

Below is the ECDC E-Board Calendar going into 2026:

2026 El Cerrito Democratic Club Executive-Board Calendar (E-Board)				
Monthly ECDC Executive Board Meeting (E-Board)	Deadline for Submitting the General Membership Meeting Agenda and Articles for the ECDC Newsletter	Monthly Newsletter Completed	Monthly ECDC Newsletter Emailed (by 6:00 pm)	General Membership Meeting Date
Thursday 4/2/2026	Wednesday 4/15/2026	Tuesday 4/21/2016	Saturday 4/25/2026	Tuesday 4/28/2026
Thursday 5/7/2026	Wednesday 5/15/2026	Tuesday 5/19/2026	Saturday 5/23/2026	Tuesday 5/26/2026

Other Community Events

El Cerrito City Council Meetings – 6:00-9:00 pm, first and third Tuesdays of most months; hybrid format; in the City Council Chambers at City Hall (10890 San Pablo Avenue) and via Zoom; meeting materials and recordings available at <https://www.el-cerrito.org/113/City-Council>

Tentative Upcoming El Cerrito City Council Agenda Items: (select highlights)



- Tuesday, April 28th – Discussion of and vote on renewing of the City’s controversial Flock surveillance camera contract; presentations from the American Civil Liberties Union, Flock Safety and El Cerrito Police Chief Paul Keith
- Tuesday, May 5th – City council budget study session # 2
- Tuesday, May 19th – Master fee schedule update; Marin Clean Energy presentation

Full agendas are available at <https://www.elcerrito.gov/482/Council-Meeting-Videos-Materials>.

Instructions for submitting comments to the City Council are here:

<https://elcerrito.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13983/Instructions-for-Public-Comments>

Coffeetime with El Cerrito City Councilmember William Ktsanes – by appointment; 9:30 am-12:00 pm first and third Saturday mornings of most months at El Cerrito Natural Foods Annex, 10387 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito; click here to schedule an in-person meeting: [Meet with William](#) / <https://tinyurl.com/Meet-William>



El Cerrito Farmers Market – 9:00 am-1:00 pm, every Tuesday and Saturday; El Cerrito Plaza, 9000 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530; southwest corner parking lot between Trader Joe's and Wells Fargo Bank; www.contracosta.ca.gov/7549/Contra-Costa-Certified-Farmers-Markets



DPCCC and West County Dem Events

<https://contracostadems.com/events/>

West County Dems Monthly meeting - 6:00 - 7:30 pm, second Tuesday of the month; This is a local Democratic club chartered by DPCCC. Meetings are via Zoom. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83146226722?pwd=cHRneSsxYkVnWWdTcTNQRnBBTmhzdz09> For more info, contact the club. <https://www.westcountymdemocraticclub.com>

DPCCC General Membership Meeting - 7:00 - 10:00 pm, If you are not a DPCCC member and wish to attend, please RSVP to the DPCCC Secretary at secretary@contracostadems.com.

If you are a DPCCC member, you should have received an email with details for the meeting about seven days in advance. If you did not, please email the DPCCC Secretary at secretary@contracostadems.com.

If you know of other community events that may be of interest to our members, please submit them to Courtney Helion at ecd.c.pubs@gmail.com for publication in future newsletters!

- Courtney Helion, VP Publications

9. Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions

REMINDER! – ECDC annual memberships expire annually on **September 30th**. If you have not yet done so, please renew for 2026. **Now is the time!**

You can do so online at: <https://ecdclub.org/join/>

Or by mailing a check to: ECDC Membership
PO Box 192
El Cerrito, CA 94530

Dues are \$5 for students, \$20 for individual members, and \$30 for two adults at the same address. The newsletter comes with membership and is delivered electronically by email. The added cost for a printed, hard-copy, postal mailed newsletter is \$18 (in addition to dues). Please make checks payable to “El Cerrito Democratic Club” and provide an email address for all individual members.

There have been some issues with double paying on paypal. **Don't pay us twice!
Wait a day or more if you suspect your payment hasn't gone through!**

If you have membership questions, please email Greg Lyman at membership.ecdc@gmail.com.

Thank you!

- Greg Lyman, VP Membership

10. Call for Newsletter Submissions

The El Cerrito Democratic Club Newsletter is published eleven months a year (each month with the exception of a combined December-January issue) in advance of the General Membership meetings. ECDC members, friends and supporters are invited to submit articles and announcements regarding local issues and events of interest. Submissions should be emailed to ecdc.pubs@gmail.com for review and editing.

- Courtney Helion, VP Publications

11. Link to the ECDC Website and Bylaws

Periodically the Club updates our Bylaws. The bylaws were changed in October 2018 to meet DPCCC requirements; revisions were proposed and adopted during the January 2021, August 2022 and March 2023 ECDC meetings. The ECDC Bylaws are posted on the ECDC website at <https://ecdclub.org/club-documents/>.

