Our Last Meeting – April 26

We were honored to have **Russell Watts** as our guest speaker. Mr. Watts has long served as Contra Costa County Treasurer & Tax Collector. He is also a CoCoTax member.

Mr. Watts explained that his office serves a dual function – the Treasurer function serves as the county banker, while the Tax Collector is responsible for collecting property taxes in a systematic and reliable manner. In 2018 about $2.6 billion secured property taxes were collected. Collection compliance is over 99%. “Unsecured taxes,” are primarily business taxes and license fees from unincorporated areas.

Property taxes can be viewed and paid online at [www.cctax.us](http://www.cctax.us). Taxes may be paid by credit card, which is subject to a 2.5% fee, while eCheck payments have no fee. Properties that are delinquent for over five years are subject to sale at tax auction by the office of the Tax Collector. As Treasurer he is also responsible for investing county “Pooled” monies which averages $3.4 billion.

“Senior Exemptions” and “Low Income Exemptions” are available for some tax line items. Eligible items are marked with an asterisk (*) on the tax bill. Some exemptions when filed, are good for life, others must be renewed annually. No exemptions are available on general obligation bonds.
A Message from Debora Allen

BART Director Debora Allen was the CoCoTax guest speaker at our February meeting.

Crime is up on BART. By the end of last year, incidents of violent crime had increased by 104% over the previous 3 years. In just the first three months of 2019, violent crime increased by another 24%, while property crime increased 12%.

In response, some BART directors propose hiring unarmed, untrained, civilian "Ambassadors" to wear bright vests and patrol trains and stations. They believe the mere presence of "ambassadors" hired from transitional living programs for homeless, convicted felons and recovering addicts are enough to make riders feel safe.

Don't be fooled. Ambassadors can never replace a highly trained police force that already includes sworn and un-sworn officers and a police cadet program.

"I oppose the ambassador program at this time. My fellow directors have great big hearts and they love humanity-- but it is not the right idea for BART right now. I want professionally trained police personnel."

This is about BART priorities. My top priority is spending BART resources wisely, on public safety initiatives that give the riding public the greatest amount of projection.

From the Sacramento Taxpayers Golden Fleece Awards dinner: (l-r) Jack Weir, Pete Laurence, Denise Gianni.