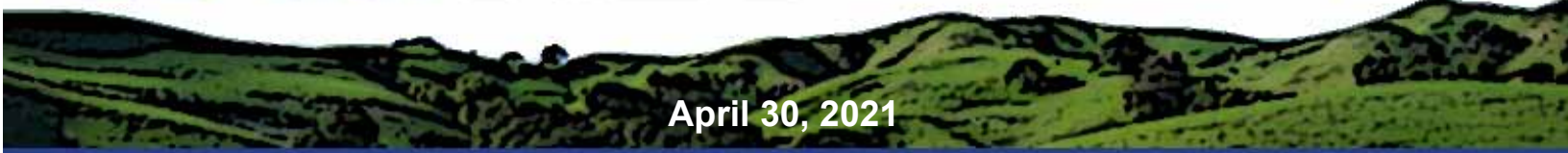


CoCoTax

Promoting accountable, cost-effective and efficient government and opposing unnecessary taxes and spending



April 30, 2021

2021 Annual Membership Meeting and Luncheon

CoCoTax Officers

- Susan Pricco**
President
- James Pezzaglia**
1st Vice President
- Ryder Brose**
2nd Vice President
- Paul Bleeg**
Treasurer/Secretary
- Honorable Mike McGill**
Past President
- Denise Sheehan**
Business Manager

Emerging from the coronavirus shutdowns, our Annual Membership meeting was a wonderful introduction to a return to normalcy! Back Forty Texas Barbecue offered a safe and hospitable environment in the large private dining room. Our special guest was attorney JASON BEZIS who has handled many cases fighting bad government and corrupt practices. Election law and the filing of actions against a municipal government is a very specialized field of law. There are unique and very limiting filing requirements. To make this area even more difficult and risky, some municipal governments that have had actions filed against them have, in turn, been known to file a civil or criminal action against the filer. In his opinion, this violates "Anti-SLAPP" (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) statutes specifically intended to prevent vindictive retaliation.



Often violated by governmental agencies, The Brown Act requires public notice with the agenda prior to the meeting. Meetings where decisions are made are required to be public.

There are a few ways citizens can have a significant influence on government without a lawyer:

- Speak before city councils/county supervisors
- File a complaint or serve on the County Civil Grand Jury
- FOIA (Freedom of Information Act.) Governments are required to provide public records upon a FOIA request.

A recent trend has been to do an 'end run' around Prop. 13 and Prop 218. An interpretation has given governments the power to avoid the 2/3 requirement of Prop. 13, if the measure is brought as an initiative by citizens. This has emboldened some agencies to use "citizen" groups to front for petition drives. Lowering the vote threshold to 50%-plus-one greatly increases the chances of passage. A pending measure in Alameda County, if passed, will then give them the highest sales tax rate in the state at 10.75%.

LUNCHTIME SPEAKER SERIES

Did you miss our outstanding presentation from Marc Joffe, Senior Policy Analyst for the Reason Foundation.

CA public employee pension is unfunded to an approximate \$1.2 Trillion. Actually, OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits, generally considered to be retiree healthcare) is virtually unfunded. In Contra Costa and elsewhere "current and future taxpayers are paying compensation for the past work of government employees".

In Contra Costa County, Danville, Lafayette and Orinda are among the very few townships in California that have no pension or OPEB liabilities. Among other potential (if partial) remedies, the



Susan L Pricco
President, Contra Costa Taxpayers Association
"Good government at affordable cost"

**Contact
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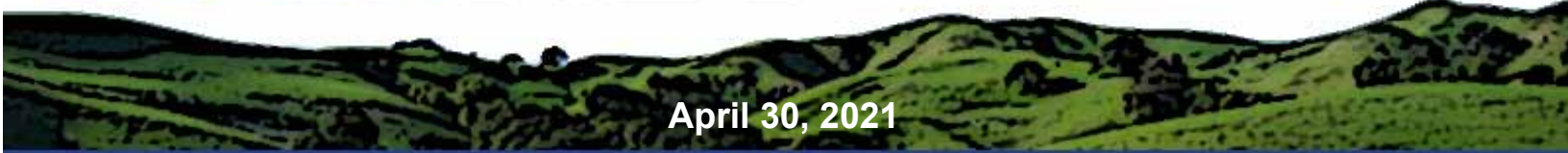
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“American Rescue Plan Act” (ARPA) includes funding some state & municipal liabilities. Contrary to common assumptions, property values have remained high despite COVID. Sales tax revenue has also remained strong. Among other things, those cities and agencies with OPEB debt should consider allocating at least 17% of a yearly budget in a reserve fund.

We know about Stockton, Vallejo and San Bernardino bankruptcies. But Orange County, considered to be a wealthy area, also declared bankruptcy. This shows that insolvency can happen anywhere. Marc also included an analysis of the current financial situation in El Cerrito and the recent scathing report by the State Auditor.

Take a look at Marc’s enlightening slide presentation here: <https://www.cocotax.org/resources>

Two good web sites for research are: “State Auditor Dashboard” https://www.auditor.ca.gov/local_high_risk/dashboard-csa on which Marc consulted for the State Auditor, and “Transparent California” at www.transparentcalifornia.com.

Unfortunately many agencies do not report their information. Taxpayers need to ask why by contacting each agency and demand compliance. For a better understanding of this serious issue, be sure to catch the replay on our website or the Contra Costa Taxpayers Association YouTube channel.

OPINION - ADD DAMS TO MITIGATE DROUGHTS

by Mark Fernwood

California has a very long history of repeated droughts, some lasting several hundred years. Studies of tree rings, sediments and other evidence have shown that in the year 840 there was a 240 year long drought, later followed by a 180 year drought. California experienced droughts in 1841, 1864, 1924, 1928–1935, 1947–1950, 1959–1960, 1976–1977 and 2006–2010.

The period of modern habitation has actually been an unusually wet period, compared to the very long term. The high risk of continued droughts should motivate us to demand a return to Governor Edmond G. Brown’s far sighted state water plan. He planned new dams that were carefully designed to be added in phases with population increases. Since Edmond Brown, no new dams been constructed despite a 43% population increase to date. Water shortages are actually of our own making.

CoCoTax is in the process of scheduling speakers on this topic. Watch for our alerts and videos.

INFORMATIONAL VIDEOS

View our two new informational videos on our website and You Tube: How to Read Your Contra Costa Tax Bill with Assistant County Tax Collector, Lulis Lopez, and in our nod to Earth Day, a presentation from the Dublin San Ramon Services District with Assistant General Manager Jan Lee on Recycled Water-Past, Present and Future with some innovative ideas on water reuse. Each video is under 20 minutes. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCra7WIkBaZhi9ZgcPV2Lq4Q>

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