



# County of Fresno

Fresno County Public Library  
Laurel Prysiazny, County Librarian

## County Librarian's Report

*February 2012*

### Measure B Renewal

On January 31<sup>st</sup> I went before the Fresno County Board of Supervisors and presented the timeline for the Measure B Renewal. By way of review, the Library is funded by special district property taxes under Education Code and a one-eighth of one percent library sales tax authorized by the passage of Measure B in 1998 (1999-2006) and in 2004 (2006-2013).

Measure B sales tax revenue supports both the Fresno County Public Library (FCPL) and the Coalinga-Huron Library District and is expiring March 31, 2013. The tax was first passed in 1998 for seven years and renewed again in 2004 for another seven years. In 2008 there was an unsuccessful campaign to try to obtain a one-quarter of one percent library sales tax with increased emphasis on the construction of new libraries. Both the 1998 and 2004 elections had over a 70% approval rating.

Preparations for the campaign to renew Measure B have been underway for nearly a year. A citizen's committee, Citizens for Libraries and Literacy Committee (CLLC) made up of Fresno County residents interested in seeing the Measure B sales tax continued past its expiration on March 31, 2013, has been very busy indeed. This group, formed in October 2010, meets twice monthly and is very active laying the ground work for the upcoming campaign by recruiting campaign volunteers, designing fundraising strategies, securing endorsements, and consulting with expert advisors. Most of the work is behind the scenes right now and will shift into high gear in the coming months. The Committee's efforts have been helped tremendously by ongoing support from Friends of the Library, including the donation of \$33,000. This however, is but a "drop in the bucket" as we need to raise \$200,000 or more to make sure we have a good chance at renewing this sales tax initiative.

The Administrative Chair of the CLLC is retired County Librarian, Karen Bosch Cobb. Karen has been involved in every Measure B campaign in a variety of capacities and is an ideal administrative chair. Dr. John Welty, President of the California State University in Fresno is the Honorary Chair. I think we are in good hands!

### Library Opinion Poll

The Library has selected Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3), to conduct an opinion poll to measure people's views on library service. The results of this are critical and this poll is funded by the Library, as has been the past practice for all three previous measures. FM3 conducted the past poll in 2008 for FCPL and also conducted polling in Fresno for Measures C and Z. This firm is very familiar with the issues facing the Library and the community.

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## Funding Implications

Measure B sales tax revenue comprises 51% of the FCPL's funding base so it is critical that the initiative to renew the sales tax passes at the polls in November 2012 (2/3 vote required). As a result of the State budget triggers, FCPL also lost all of its State funding for this fiscal year which comprised approximately two percent (2%) of its funding, or \$445,883. The San Joaquin Valley Library System (SJVLS) which maintains FCPL's catalog and Internet connection lost \$525,423 of California Library Services Act (CSLA) funding. This loss will require FCPL's membership fees to increase by \$171,603 to cover the Library's portion of the SJVLS lost revenue. This means the Library's total loss of State funding is \$541,240.

The loss of Measure B funding combined with the loss of State revenues equates to a 53% reduction in total should the renewal of Measure B fail. It is expected that with a 53% reduction in revenues, the County will need to close several sites and eliminate several programs. Additionally, this reduction would result in approximately 53% of the library staff being eliminated, which equates to 154 positions, leaving 138 staff. This reduction will take library service to levels that will be worse than those provided prior to the implementation of Measure B funding in 1998. This is due to the increased operational costs for facilities, and the increased salary and benefits costs which comprise 65% of the Library's operational budget. Clearly Measure B must be renewed.

## Education and Marketing ~ Telling Our Story

A good deal of our efforts this year will be focused on library education. While library staff are not allowed to engage in electioneering unless they are on their own time, we can educate the public about who we are, what we do, and our value to the community.

Most recently you would have received our annual report in the form of a calendar. This was done purposefully for this year as a marketing tool so that the Library would be in the forefront of people's minds the entire year. And what better way to show our value than by demonstrating the impact we have on the lives of those who use our programs, services, and facilities?

So the excitement has begun and the ride will be exhilarating. I hope each and every one of you will help us with our quest to maintain our funding by helping out with the campaign...on your own time. A good solid library in your community is worth everyone's time and investment.