

El Cerrito Council Endorses Doctors Parcel Tax

Without discussion, the El Cerrito City Council Monday night endorsed Measure J, a November mail-ballot measure for a \$47 parcel tax increase in West Contra Costa County to help keep Doctors Medical Center from closing.

By [Charles Burress](#)



The El Cerrito City Council endorsed an upcoming ballot measure to impose an additional parcel tax that would raise \$5 million to save the threatened Doctors Medical Center in San Pablo.

"Preventing the closure of the only full service emergency room serving all West County residents is critical to all El Cerrito residents," said the resolution adopted by the council on a 4-to-0 vote. Mayor Ann Cheng was absent.

The measure — which would impose a \$47 parcel tax on homes and higher amounts on commercial properties — was approved without discussion as part of the consent calendar.

Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, whose district includes El Cerrito and Doctors Hospital and who chairs the board of directors overseeing the hospital, urged support of the measure, saying that the medical center will have to close if the measure fails.

A hospital closure, he said, would result in "negative medical outcomes" due to increased patient transport times and increased waiting time in the remaining hospital emergency rooms.

Even residents who don't ordinarily use Doctors could suffer if it closes, he said. Kaiser members, for example, are taken to Doctors in cases of stroke or heart attack, he said. And, he added, "if Doctors were to close, it would dramatically impact the emergency room at Kaiser and cause much longer waits and put a strain on services there."

The \$5 million that would be raised by the measure is an essential element in closing an \$18 million funding gap faced by the medical center, he said. "Without it, frankly, the hospital would close next year," he said.

The tax would apply to residential and commercial properties between El Cerrito and Crockett.

If voters approve the tax, homeowners would pay \$47 a year, on top of an existing \$52 annual parcel tax approved by voters in 2004 to keep the Doctors open. Apartment building owners, business owners and industrial property owners would pay from \$282 to \$940 per parcel per year, depending on parcel size. If voters approve the tax, it would take effect in July, 2012. The tax would expire if Doctors were forced to close.

Ballots will go out in the next week or so, Gioia said, and must be received by the county elections by 5 p.m. Nov. 15.