

News from: **The City of Oakland**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wildfire Prevention Assessment District Narrowly Defeated

Remaining Funds Available Through 2014 Fire Season

Oakland, CA—Voters narrowly rejected the renewal of the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District in the mail-in election that ended this week, according to the City's unofficial count.

Of the 41,700 ballots issued, 12,318 were returned, for a 29.5% turnout rate.

Voters cast 8,150 ballots in favor of renewing the assessment; 4,140 ballots were cast in opposition. Twenty-five (25) were sent back with no preference marked, and three were sent back "overvoted," meaning more than one option had been selected, thus nullifying the vote.

That gave the renewal 66.3% support, which was three-tenths of a percent (0.3%) or 66 votes below the two-thirds support requirement to pass.

These results will be certified by the City Clerk and then go to the City Council for final certification on Dec. 10.

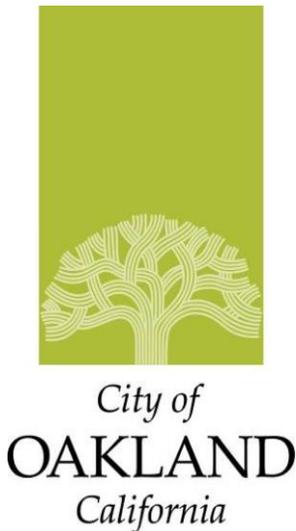
The ballot language asked voters: "To continue services preventing wildfires and the spread of fire, including: goat grazing to clear brush/weeds; maintaining firebreaks; fire patrols on high fire danger days; roadside mowing; dead tree removal; and brush cutting, including along streets and emergency escape routes, shall the City replace the expiring assessment with an annual parcel tax for 10 years (undeveloped \$39; condominium/multifamily \$58.50; others \$78) with citizens' oversight, annual spending limits and audits?"

The assessment expires in January but will be funded through the 2014 fire season through funds collected on the 2013 property tax bill.

BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

After the October 1991 Oakland Hills firestorm, a Wildfire Prevention Assessment District was formed (Ordinance No. 11526 CMS, December 1, 1992, amended by Ord. No. 11561 CMS, March 9, 1993, and revised by Ordinance No. 12556 CMS, November 8, 1993). The monies collected were used to reduce the fuel load in the Oakland Hills and provided enhanced fire services during peak fire season. The assessment district was for five (5) years and lapsed in 1997. District voters did not move to re-establish it, and during the years 1997 through 2003, the City maintained basic brush removal and inspection services.

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Media Contact:

Karen Boyd
City of Oakland
510-449-4401
kboyd@oaklandnet.com

In 2003, with all available sources of funding exhausted, and with State-wide budgetary deficits promising to divert property taxes away from local governments, a City / Community steering committee drafted a proposal to create the Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD) for the purpose of supplementing fire prevention, suppression and preparedness programs and local area projects above what was generally provided by the Fire Department, including increased compliance inspections of public properties, public outreach and education, goat grazing, and brush removal.

The City Council approved the proposal (Ord. No. 12556 CMS, November 18, 2003) and mail-in ballots were sent out on November 6, 2003 to property owners in the proposed district; the ballots were due back by January 6, 2004. Approximately 50% of the ballots were mailed back to the City, with voting solidly in favor of forming a new assessment district. On January 20, 2004, the City Council voted to establish the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (Resolution No. 78305 CMS)

In each of the past 10 years, with an assessment of \$65 per single-family dwelling, approximately \$1.8 million per year has been generated (owners of multiple-family dwellings were assessed based upon the number of units, and large property owners--including the City of Oakland and East Bay Regional Parks--paid assessments based on the development status of the parcel and lot size).

A Citizen's Oversight Committee met once a month to monitor the finances of Wildfire Prevention District. An independent financial audit was reported to Council annually. The most recent Wildfire Prevention Assessment District Final Annual Report, FY 2013-14, was presented to the City Council on June 4, 2013.

The annual reports and annual independent audits are available on the Wildfire Prevention District website at www.oaklandnet.com/wildfireprevention.

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