

BAY AREA & STATE

More money to help homeless a likely bet for S.F. ballot

By Heather Knight | May 9, 2015 | Updated: May 9, 2015 7:40pm

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Photo: Brant Ward, The Chronicle

Your lucky numbers, May 10


A taste of San Francisco history at Anchor

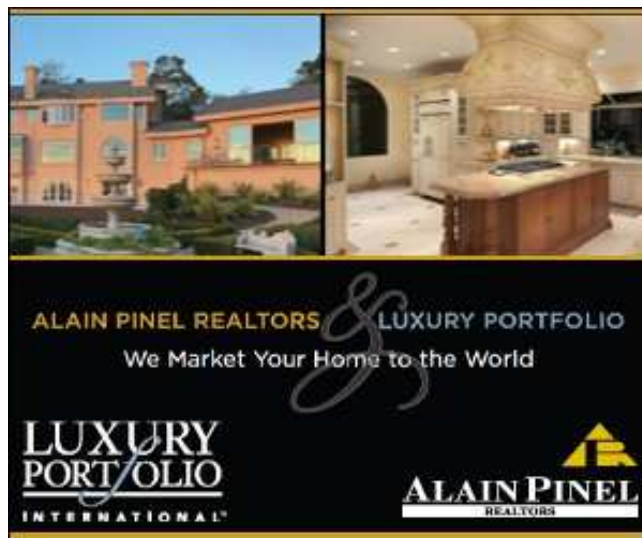

Paul ventures into S.F.

ghout the facility.
n the Mission
I help the people

A San Francisco election ~~wouldn't~~^{Brewing} be a San Francisco election without a controversial ballot measure related to homelessness.

Well, get ready, because the November ballot could have two such measures, and they'd both be related to asking for even more money to combat one of San Francisco's more enduring, frustrating problems.

The city now spends \$165 million annually on services and supportive housing for homeless people, but voters might be asked to raise that amount. (A cynical person would bring up that old axiom about throwing good money after bad, but we're not cynical. Nope, not us.)



Supervisor **Mark Farrell**, who has made homelessness his signature issue, will decide in a few weeks whether to go to the ballot to ask voters for more money for homeless housing and services. Meanwhile, a group of more left-leaning politicians with the Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club is considering a separate ballot measure that could fund the city's new navigation center for the long-term homeless or wet housing for chronic alcoholics.

Farrell's political consultant, **John Whitehurst**, is leading telephone polling of San Francisco voters to test two ideas: an increase in the sales tax or creating a mandatory set-aside in the annual budget for homeless programs akin to what the city already does with guaranteed allotments for children's programs, the library system and other popular causes.

Farrell said that he's not ready to divulge specifics but that money approved by voters would mostly go to "housing, housing, housing."

MORE S.F. INSIDER

The results of January's homeless count — mandated every other year by the federal government — should be released in July, and Farrell said he expects it to show even more homeless people living in San Francisco than the 2013 count of 6,436.

A recent Chamber of Commerce poll found that 58 percent of San Franciscans think homelessness and street behavior is getting worse, whereas only 9 percent think it's getting better.

Those results didn't surprise Farrell, who said that calls to his office from residents complaining about homelessness have risen and that all neighborhoods are seeing more homeless people since major construction projects have roused them from their longtime, out-of-the-way encampments in South of Market.

"There's not only a likely growth in our homeless population, but it's becoming much more visible and impactful in the everyday lives of our residents as the issue creeps into our neighborhoods more than ever before," he said.

Farrell said he was especially shaken by the April incident in the Marina district in which a homeless man grabbed a 5-year-old girl by her neck and pushed her into a wall as she walked in broad daylight with her mother.

In the past few days, I've seen a clearly mentally ill woman screaming and dancing wildly just steps from City Hall, another apparently homeless man walk into busy traffic on Franklin Street against a red light and yell obscenities at drivers, and another person sprawled on a Market Street sidewalk and lighting a crack pipe. Yeah, things are not good.



Giants propose 'affordable' housing, but for whom?



Battle of the politicians for Harvard bragging rights

What's in a name for Democratic moderates and progressives?



In S.F., the good times roll — right over the unlucky

S.F. Democrats come out early in favor of Ed Lee re-election

A sales tax increase would need the support of two-thirds of voters, whereas a set-aside would require just a majority. Farrell said that there are pluses and minuses to both, and that the results of the polling, which aren't in yet, will determine which course he takes.

Voters may also be deciding a separate ballot measure from members of the Harvey Milk Club, a powerful progressive group. Co-President **Laura Thomas** said the group has discussed either a funding measure or a declaration of policy that would make permanent the city's temporary navigation center in the Mission District to get members of homeless encampments inside quickly.

Other ideas being discussed by the club are funding for a wet house, which allows chronic drunks to live inside while still drinking alcohol, and money for a safe injection site, which allows intravenous drug users a place to shoot up safely.

"It's motivated by feeling like San Francisco can do better around how we're addressing homelessness and what kinds of options we're giving people to help them find their way out of homelessness," Thomas said.

Note to Mayor **Ed Lee**: When both the moderate supervisor from the Marina and the leaders of the progressive Milk Club think the city's most intractable problem is getting even worse, they just might have a point.

We told you last week that Supervisor **Julie Christensen** had mistakenly e-mailed supporters saying she'd been endorsed by the Police Officers Association in her race to retain her District Three seat against old newcomer (new oldcomer?) **Aaron Peskin**, who held the seat from 2000 to 2008.

The problem? The cops haven't endorsed anybody yet. Turns out that wasn't the only error with her endorsement list. She also said Supervisor **Malia Cohen** had endorsed her — though the District 10 representative has made no endorsement in the race.

Frankly, we wouldn't be surprised if both the police and Cohen wind up endorsing

Christensen. But Christensen, who is new to political campaigns, has learned the lesson that casual words of support are not actual endorsements until they're signed, sealed and delivered.

We caught up the other day with Ethics Commissioner **Ben Hur**, who said the commission is embarking on a national search to replace Director **John St. Croix** after he tendered his resignation.

The commission had mixed feelings about St. Croix's performance, and is "casting a wide net" for his replacement, Hur said.

"Nobody's perfect, but I think he did a fine job," he said in what wouldn't exactly be called a ringing endorsement.

Hur, you may recall, was the one ethics commissioner to vote against forwarding Mayor **Ed Lee**'s official misconduct charge against Sheriff **Ross Mirkarimi** to the Board of Supervisors amid the sheriff's domestic violence scandal in 2012. The commission forwarded the matter to the board, which wound up allowing Mirkarimi to stay in his post.

The vote by the highly regarded Stanford- and Harvard-educated lawyer was believed by some observers to give cover to the board to allow the controversial sheriff to keep his job. So will Hur endorse Mirkarimi or his challenger, **Vicki Hennessy**, in the November sheriff's race?

"No, I won't endorse," he said. "I'm not commenting on that race at all."

Heather Knight is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer who covers City Hall politics. E-mail: hknight@sfgate.com Twitter: @hknight



Heather Knight

City Hall Reporter

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