

January 31, 2023

TO: Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Mariana Moore, Chair, Measure X Community Advisory Board (MXCAB)

RE: The path forward for the Measure X Advice and Oversight

The purpose of this memo is to convey to the Board of Supervisors and the public, on behalf of the Measure X Community Advisory Board (MXCAB), the collective views and recommendations of MXCAB members regarding MXCAB's future role. This document briefly summarizes MXCAB's work to date, lays out the successes and challenges identified by MXCAB members during the course of their work, and provides recommendations on the most effective role for MXCAB going forward. The two most recent MXCAB meetings were devoted in part to securing this feedback from MXCAB as a whole, so that this information could be presented to the Board of Supervisors on behalf of the Advisory Body as a whole.

Background on the formation and activities of MXCAB:

Following the passage of the Measure X half-cent sales tax measure in 2020, the Board of Supervisors created the Measure X Community Advisory Board in March 2021. An open recruitment process was held to fill the 27 seats, and MXCAB commenced its work the following month, in April 2021. In accordance with the Bylaws, MXCAB members launched an intensive and rigorous Community Needs Assessment that culminated in a report, including funding recommendations, that was presented to the Board of Supervisors in October 2021. The Board subsequently allocated Measure X funds to a variety of programs and services, including many but not all of the priorities recommended by MXCAB. In 2022, MXCAB members received limited updates from County Administrator's Office (CAO) staff, and from some department heads including Employment & Human Services and Health Services, on the status of, and plans for, Measure X-funded projects. The County also contracted with an independent consulting firm, Further the Work, to conduct a detailed written assessment of MXCAB's work and impact to date, along with an assessment of the processes MXCAB employed in conducting its work.

MXCAB successes to date:

MXCAB members identified the following achievements as being particularly notable during the first two years of MXCAB's work:

- **Appointment process:** The Board of Supervisors' public, inclusive, and rigorous appointment process resulted in the appointment of 27 members (including alternates) who effectively represent diverse communities, perspectives, geographic areas, and areas of expertise, including lived experience of the community needs addressed by Measure X.
- **Group culture and practices focused on equity and inclusion:** MXCAB members allocated time early on to develop a set of Operating Principles that grounded the work in equity, transparency and inclusion. In addition, with the support of County staff, document translation (into Spanish) and simultaneous interpretation (American Sign Language and Spanish) were provided for all MXCAB meetings. In addition, all issue panels during the needs assessment included at least one person with lived experience of the issues being discussed, and residents were given equal

billing along with County and community organization leaders who provided programmatic expertise. Lastly, MXCAB's leadership and members were deeply committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment during meetings, with the result that meeting attendance frequently exceeded 60-100 people.

- **Outcomes:** Despite the time pressures that necessitated weekly meetings of four or more hours, MXCAB members worked well together to conduct the rigorous community needs assessment and produce a comprehensive report with recommendations to submit to the Board of Supervisors. The recommendations provided to the Board of Supervisors were adopted by a unanimous vote of MXCAB members.

Challenges and learnings:

As a new advisory body with a complex and urgent charge – to assess community needs and make funding recommendations in a very short timeframe – several challenges arose as MXCAB conducted its work over the past two years.

- **Insufficient or conflicting information:** During the initial round of funding decisions, the lack of information provided to MXCAB about the Supervisors' planned process for allocating Measure X funds created confusion and dismay for many MXCAB members; for example, the Board of Supervisors did not convey to the public nor MXCAB the specific criteria they would be using to make funding decisions; and nor did they provide an overall written rationale for the funding decisions they did make. In addition, once the initial community needs assessment and funding recommendations were complete, MXCAB spent much of the ensuing months seeking to understand the status of MXCAB's current and projected revenues, the timing and process of the next annual community needs assessment as called for in the Bylaws, and how the public would be kept apprised of the status of Measure X-funded programs and services.
- **Role confusion:** During the first year of MXCAB's work, there was a clear understanding of the respective roles of MXCAB members and County staff, and the process ran smoothly. Once the funding recommendations were submitted, the work of MXCAB became less clear-cut, and the roles of MXCAB and CAO staff in relation to carrying out MXCAB's became increasingly unclear. While MXCAB members have always been clear that the Board of Supervisors is ultimately responsible with overseeing Measure X funds and making funding decisions, the MXCAB Bylaws do call for MXCAB to "evaluate annually all outcomes and impacts of programs and services funded by Measure X," but no clear path was laid out as to how to best go about that, and in what timeframe, and with what support from County staff. Lastly, with most Measure X funds (current and into the foreseeable future) seemingly now locked in by virtue of ongoing program costs, the role and timing of MXCAB in performing an annual assessment of community needs has become increasingly unclear.

Recommendations for moving forward

When the sales tax measure was put on the ballot, a large coalition of county leaders, labor organizations, community-based organizations, faith communities, and others came together to mount a strong and unified campaign. There was a shared recognition that, because sales tax measures are regressive, the resulting tax funds should be prioritized to help residents who are most in need of services and support. From the very beginning of the campaign, there was clear commitment from diverse stakeholders to ensure that the process for distributing Measure X funds was open, transparent, and deeply connected to ongoing input from community members, including those who most need

support. Based on testimony provided to MXCAB over the past two years, community members and stakeholders view MXCAB as a vital embodiment of this stated intent, and are deeply protective of MXCAB's role in inviting, channeling, and communicating public input in an inclusive and welcoming way.

Over the past two years, MXCAB has served as an important ambassador and bridge to the larger public, providing an ongoing forum for community members, County staff, and other stakeholders to provide information, share diverse ideas and perspectives, and develop recommendations for consideration by MXCAB and ultimately by the Board of Supervisors. MXCAB's model has gained regional recognition as an important and innovative model of transparent and community-inclusive budgeting.

As the Board of Supervisors considers next steps regarding the ongoing role of MXCAB in Measure X oversight, MXCAB members urge the Board to consider the importance of maintaining a public space, via MXCAB, where County staff, community stakeholders, and members of the public can share information and updates, develop more detailed ideas to assess the impact and efficacy of Measure X-funded projects, and demonstrate to taxpayers and other members of the public that Measure X dollars are being invested in a way that honors the intent of Measure X and uplifts our community as a whole. While MXCAB members agree that financial oversight of Measure X funds is best performed by an entity other than MXCAB, the deeper ongoing assessment of the progress and impact of Measure X-funded programs and services is a responsibility that is uniquely suited to MXCAB's mission and strengths, in partnership with County leadership and staff.

cc: County Administrator Monica Nino and County Finance Director Adam Nguyen