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Touchdown

By Robert Haugh

Scoring one of the biggest Touchdowns of their history, the fabled five-time Super Bowl champion 49ers were ecstatic when Santa Clarans preliminarily approved Measure J – the citizen-initiated ballot measure putting forth the approval of a 68,500-seat NFL stadium project slated for Tasman Blvd. at Centennial Way on 40 acres at the "overflow" parking lot for Great America on Tuesday evening by a landslide.

One of the most heated issues in Santa Clara's history, Measure J is considered as important as other such past decisions and measures in the City including the City's highly risky and controversial approval of operating Great America on June 5, 1986.



Of the 46,000 registered voters in Santa Clara, approximately 22,000 voters voiced their opinions, with close to 61 percent voting in favor and 39 percent voting against the stadium project. As of very late on Tuesday evening at press time, 33 of 58 precincts were reported, with 9,859 votes in favor of Measure J and 6,418 against.

"It's been three years of hard work and it's coming to fruition," Mayor Patricia Mahan said. "This is a great night. It's sort of a pause to celebrate and hopefully there's a lot more work to do, but we're ready for it."

Measure J's ballot statement question: "Shall the City of Santa Clara adopt Ordinance 17.20 leasing City property for a professional football stadium and other events; no use of City General or Enterprise funds for construction; no new taxes for residents for stadium; Redevelopment Agency funds capped for construction; private party pays all construction cost overruns; no City/Agency obligation for stadium operating/maintenance; private party payment of projected fair market rent; and additional funds for senior/youth/library/recreation to City's General Fund?" was approved by an crushing 3-to-2 margin by City's voters.

Attending the capacity-filled American Legion Post 419 were over 250 avid stadium supporters, including "Team SC" – the title dubbed to the super majority of the Santa Clara City Council – Mayor Mahan and Council members Jamie Matthews, Kevin Moore, Dominic Caserta and Joe Kornder. In addition, County Assessor Larry Stone, County Supervisor Ken Yeager, business leaders, labor leaders, community leaders and several past Civic leaders attended the Measure J election night party, as well as 49ers alumni including Guy McIntyre and Eric Wright.

"I love Santa Clara and am extremely excited for how this stadium will make Santa Clara an even better place to live, work and play," says Moore. "I am very proud of the hard work of everyone who has made this happen – and am very pleased that Santa Clarans once again showed their intelligence by approving the great project."

Rocking to the delectable tunes of the Santa Clara based "Sparkletones," stadium supporters enjoyed mingling all evening to an array of great 50s and 60s tunes while patiently awaiting election results to trickle in.

The Santa Clara stadium project has been developed and discussed for over three-and-half years. The initial feasibility study was initiated by the Santa Clara City Council in January 2007. In the ensuing years, City officials and 49ers representatives spent countless hours hammering out the details of the stadium project, with an official term sheet having been approved in June 2008 – which provided the essential terms and groundwork for the entire project. The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) was approved earlier this year.

The next steps in the stadium project will see the City and 49ers complete a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA) that will finalize all details of the project, including financing sources.

The LEED-certified stadium is expected to host 37 large events a year, spanning 46 event days --- with large events being "events requiring off-site parking." The stadium is slated to open for the 2014 football season.

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