



Measure N—Town of Portola Valley: Town Charter and Property Tax Transfer Measure

The Question:

Shall the measure maintaining Portola Valley's independent status be adopted, providing: wildfire prevention/vegetation management; 911 emergency response/police patrols; local zoning/planning services; storm drain repair; and general government services; by adopting a charter for the Town of Portola Valley solely for, and establishing a real property transfer tax of \$10 per \$1,000, paid by buyers or sellers of property, until ended by voters, providing approximately \$2,000,000 in locally controlled funding annually, with independent oversight?

The Situation:

Portola Valley is currently a general law town, with powers granted by the California Constitution and other state laws. Its acts must be consistent with state law.

In contrast, the California Constitution authorizes charter towns and cities to adopt local rules regarding "municipal affairs" that differ from state law, sometimes called "home rule" authority. A charter town's charter explains which municipal affairs are within the town's home rule authority. State law requires a town to become a charter town before it can adopt a Real Property Transfer Tax (RPTT).

The Proposal:

Measure N would allow voters to decide whether Portola Valley should become a Charter Town and establish a locally controlled Real Property Transfer Tax (RPTT). If enacted, all funds from the general tax measure must be utilized for the Town of Portola Valley. No funds could be taken by the County of San Mateo, Sacramento, or the Federal Government. The Town Finance and Audit Committee would provide independent oversight of annual audits, including revenue generated by the measure.

If voters approve the measure, it would establish a Real Property Transfer Tax (RPTT) of \$10 per \$1,000 of a property's sale price, paid by buyers or sellers at the time of sale, to provide locally controlled funding for essential Town services and long-term financial stability.

A "Yes" vote is a vote to adopt the Charter and authorize the RPTT.

A "No" vote is a vote against the Charter and RPTT.

A simple majority is required to approve the measure.

Fiscal Effects:

If approved, Measure N would generate approximately \$2 million in additional annual revenue.

Supporters Say:

- Measure N would allow Portola Valley to stabilize financially, maintain local autonomy, maintain emergency reserves, and remain self-reliant.
- Measure N would maintain wildfire prevention services, including vegetation and brush management and clearance programs, reducing the chance of wildfires.
- Measure N would give taxpayers local control and has strict accountability provisions.
- Measure N would build community resilience by repairing deteriorating storm drains and preventing flooding and water pollution.

Opponents Say:

- A transfer tax, like a tariff, reduces the seller's net gain and/or increases the buyer's price, limiting both the number of potential buyers and realized prices.
- We are not at risk of financial collapse or loss of self-determination, and thus Measure N is not necessary.

Supporters:

- Brenda Lane Munks
- Nancy Lund (Town Historian)
- Gary Nielsen (Former mayor)
- Rita Comes Whitney
- Fred Leach (Town Trails and Paths Committee Member)

Opponents:

- William Urban (Member, Portola Valley Finance Committee)
- Danna Breen

Sources:

- <https://smcacre.gov/elections/november-3-2026-statewide-general-election>
- <https://www.portolavalley.net/community/engagement>