Rebuttal Argument

Here are the facts: Measure A authorizes a blank check using taxpayer dollars for the civic center project. The Council is already talking about a new Parcel Tax for the November ballot, charging for fallen trees in roadways and other new taxes on residents. What’s next?

We agree -- improved facilities are warranted. But the $14M -- and likely much more once bids are received, the building is furnished and upkeep is considered -- of so-called "unallocated public funds" targeted to be spent on a new civic center is not spare change.

A huge structure with a large foyer, gym, and copper gutters was not controversial if funded by private donations. The dismal failure of that campaign -- which received pledges of less than 30% of the $25 million promised -- should cause us to reconsider the project, not to bail it out with taxpayer money.

Town studies determined that Atherton needs more than $72M for drainage deficiencies, school and pedestrian route safety improvements, pension and healthcare debt obligations. These basics can't be funded if "unallocated" tax dollars are diverted to a grandiose complex.

Not long ago, Atherton was facing possible insolvency, with skyrocketing retiree and staff obligations. A radical restructuring together with fortuitous increased property tax revenues ultimately provided a stable financial footing. But fate -- and real estate markets -- can be fickle.

The project should be cut back. We should be shown alternative designs WITH their costs -- construction, furnishing and annual operating budgets -- before authorizing the use of our tax dollars.

Vote NO!

250 words