

Supervisors Back County Detox Center By MATTHEW ARTZ

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Alameda County took a big step last week towards building a detox center when the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to set aside \$2 million to fund a program.

The vote was part of an overall recommendation from Alameda County Health Care Agency Director Dave Kears on how to spend money from Measure A, a March ballot initiative that raised the county sales tax one-half cent to fund the county medical center and other health services.

The Berkeley City Council and the Telegraph Avenue Association have for years urged the county to establish a detox center to give addicts a safe place to seek treatment.

"It's one of the most glaring missing ingredients for social services in Berkeley and Alameda County," said Councilmember Kriss Worthington, who noted that San Francisco, San Mateo, Marin and Contra Costa Counties all had detox facilities.

County officials are estimating that Measure A will bring in \$60 million this year, of which \$20 million would be eligible for public health services like a detox center and the rest going to bail out the cash-strapped county hospital system.

The current plan, said Lara Bice, aide to Supervisor Keith Carson, is to ensure access to detox services for residents in southern and eastern Alameda County and build a center in the northern part of the county, where the demand is highest. Bice said the county didn't anticipate opening a center until after the current fiscal year ends in July and that county officials had not yet determined a location for the center.

The Board of Supervisors voted to fund a detox center with \$2 million this year and 9.5 percent of available Measure A funds over the next two years.

Bice added that \$2 million would be enough to operate modest detox services, but that the county would likely seek additional funds after it finalized plans to operate the center.