



Letters to the Editor

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

Recently I've had the feeling there was a void in my life. Sophie Braccini's May 6 article gave me the answer: Roundabouts! That's what's been missing. Roundabouts! Fortunately, Ron Boyle of Omni-Means confirmed my suspicion. He explained roundabouts "... can create a sense of place." Equally fortunate, Mr. Boyle specializes in designing roundabouts. Talk about coincidence!

Ignore the naysayers. Who can trust Onoda and Trotter? They sound as if they are actually trying to live up to their campaign promises. Listen to Onoda: "I say if we don't have to spend the money, don't spend the money." What's she trying to do, give politicians a good name? Next she'll be saying, "Six million here, six million there, and pretty soon it adds up to real money."

Come on Teresa, Dave, get with the program! Here's Moraga's opportunity to outspend Lafayette. Drive a short distance into Lafayette to where Rohrer and South Lucile run into St. Marys Road, and what do you see? Three stop signs each. How much did Lafayette pay for six lousy stop signs? Less than \$6 million you can bet. How pedestrian! Speaking of pedestrians, the roundabout at Rheem Boulevard and St. Marys Road could combine pedestrians, bicycles, and motorized vehicles, making that roundabout more exciting than a roller coaster. That should give people "a sense of place?"

Why stop with two roundabouts? Consider the junction of Moraga Road, Alta Mesa, and the shopping center easement. Another roundabout! People drive through it now as if it's a roundabout. And 50 feet north at the St. Marys Road intersection, replace the signal lights with another roundabout. Think of it ... two adjacent roundabouts! Moraga could boast of having one of the country's few roundabouts connecting to another roundabout.

But why settle for outdoor roundabouts? Why not bring that "sense of place" indoors? Moraga citizens are noted for volunteering for community projects. Perhaps some citizen do-it-yourselfers could volunteer to construct an interior roundabout where the town council meets and where town employees work. While not normally noted for my civic volunteerism, if volunteer builders build a grand interior roundabout, I volunteer to furnish the center cell ... with a giant round of cheese.

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Lafayette

Council Considers Rent Control

... continued from page A3



Photo Cathy Tyson

He suggested if there will be a moratorium, "eviction protection" should be included. When asked how much the rent stabilization program costs the city of Berkeley, he replied \$4 million, with 22 full-time employees.

Council Member Don Tatzin observed interesting clusters of those who commented: a group of smaller property owners who spoke against a rent moratorium, and none of their tenants; and, conversely, many tenants of large rental complexes, specifically from the 1038 on Second project, and the property manager who didn't show up. "I think that says something," reflected Tatzin. One self-described mom and pop landlord who owns a fourplex spoke up about some research she did at the county assessor's office. By her rough calculations there are 96 landlords who own from two to four rental units within the city, with an additional 37 landlords who own between five and 24 units.

Surmising only 10 entities own larger complexes -- eight who own between 25 and 59 units, and only two property owners who own 60 or more units -- Tatzin figured if the city is to pursue a temporary rent increase moratorium, it should be specific to larger properties.

Mayor Brandt Anderson agreed that there are a number of responsible landlords doing a good job and that the city should focus on the new owner who needs "to be held to the fire." Unfortunately without an actual moratorium, the city has little leverage over a private property owner.

Ultimately the council decided to have the city manager pursue conversations with Sack Properties, as well as work on preparing an emergency moratorium for consideration at the next meeting that would apply exclusively to multi-family projects with 25 units or more.

Over the years, the apartment complex at issue has been called a variety of names: Alta Vista, El Cerro, and La Playa apartments. The new owner, Sack Properties is based in San Francisco and took possession in February.

Can the city of Lafayette control how much of an increase an independent business entity can charge for rent? According to a parade of frustrated tenants, what the new owners have done is extreme and egregious. Many complain that they can no longer afford to live in the city they love where they are raising their children.

California state law limits rent control to older, multi-unit apartment buildings. According to the city attorney Mala Subramanian of Best, Best and Krieger, LLP it's possible for the city to adopt a moratorium limiting rent increases, although it must comply with state law regarding local rent control ordinances. In order to fully consider whether to adopt rent stabilization, the Lafayette City Council first should adopt a moratorium, which requires a four out of five vote. At this point, Subramanian was tasked with preparing the paperwork for a moratorium, but it's not clear if city council members will vote for it.

The Law Offices of Jonathan D. Larose APC.

A Family Law Practice

Walnut Creek ~ Fremont

www.jdlaroselaw.com

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1660 Olympic Boulevard Suite 215 Walnut Creek, CA. 94596
Tel: 866-585-6314 Fax: 510-742-9600

39199 Paseo Padre Parkway (Main Office), Suite E Fremont, CA. 94538
Tel: 510-742-6100 Fax: 510-742-9600



Jonathan D. Larose, Esq. MBA

Compost Giveaway

Saturday, May 23 from 9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon

- Bring your own bags/containers.
- Get up to 3 cubic yards (while supplies last) of compost, made from your green cart organics!
- Bring proof of residence (Walnut Creek, Danville, Alamo, Lafayette, Orinda, Moraga, unincorporated Central Contra Costa)
- Information booth: Free home composting workshop schedule, compost bin information and order form, and a Contra Costa County Certified Master Gardener on hand to answer any questions!



Free Kitchen food scrap pails will also be available

Heather Farm Park

301 N San Carlos Drive, Walnut Creek
Front parking lot near the field



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