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Letters to the Editor

Chess Club Needs Some Mates

Dear Editor,

I recommend your readers to a chess club started at the Orinda Community Center for any interested. This is a free club for those wanting play chess. They meet every Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m. Age 8 - 10 years to senior citizens like myself are welcome.

The club needs the help of more members to keep it sustained as not everyone can attend every week. If you enjoy the mind challenge of playing chess or interested to learn how please come.

Special thanks goes to the two young women Katie and Maya who started the club as their community project.

They have sustained it through their own effort of securing the room and providing chess boards and pieces and encouraging the players.

John Nackley
Orinda, CA.

Facing Facts on Orinda

Dear Editor,

We keep reading of plans to revitalize downtown Orinda. We need to face the facts:

- 1) Unlike Lafayette, we are divided by the freeway;
- 2) Unlike Lafayette which draws shoppers from Moraga, most of our shoppers are from only Orinda;
- 3) Lafayette and Moraga have a combined population of slightly under 50,000 while Orinda has around 17,000, making us much less attractive to a major store like Trader Joe's wanting to locate here;
- 4) The theater side of town is quite walkable, but Orinda Village is spread out and much less conducive to pedestrian traffic.

Dave Sullivan
Orinda

An Open Letter to Moraga

Dear Editor,

Why did you vote for town council members? Was it because of their position on development? Was it because they seemed fiscally responsible? These are good reasons. Was it, however, because you wanted them to promote the agendas of extreme political groups? I doubt it.

And yet this is exactly what's happening. Politically extreme groups are attending town council meetings and voicing their opinions, while those of us paying the bills stay home. They are pressuring council members to adopt ordinances that promote their political agendas, while opening us up to considerable liability of which they will not share. It's a good deal for them. Why take on the risk of your agenda when you can get town council to do it for you?

To be clear, the recent issues these groups are promoting are sanctuary city and gun control.

It's safe to say that these are platforms of the far left, but that is not the point. It could just as easily be mandatory school prayer. These are partisan issues that have little to no upside, but massive downside risk (lawsuits), to small local governments with very limited budgets.

We do not elect our town council members on a partisan basis. The ballot doesn't even list their political affiliations and, unless we asked them, we would likely never know. Why? Probably because we do not expect them to act in a partisan fashion as council members. Rather, we elect them for the "good reasons" stated above.

And so, it is time for those of us from the middle of the political spectrum to stand up and take notice. Attend council meetings and speak. E-mail your Council members and let them know how you feel. I'm reasonably certain the vast majority of us want them to manage our towns in a fiscally responsible manner, with cost/benefit analyses reviewed before every

expenditure. Let the extremists promote their positions, but let them bear the cost and risk themselves. Otherwise, we all might find ourselves on our hands and knees, praying mandatorily, to the King of Sanctuary City, asking for our guns back.

Doug Home
Moraga

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

Lafayette

Leigh Creekside Park

Option three suggested bringing together the two sides to work on another redesign and option four presented no amendment to the Leigh Creekside Park master plan so that the play structure could not move forward.

Katayanagi said that the city had received hundreds of letters both for and against the project with the split being about 50/50, a claim that some of the "passives" said they doubted and pointed out that many of the "actives" used form letters.

The packed room heard from several children arguing for keeping the park passive, citing that they enjoy the park as it is -- a place to enjoy nature.

Many of the passives spoke of benefactors John and Ethel Leigh's original desire to keep the park passive, as well as with concerns over increased traffic and parking problems.

At least a couple of the passives were elementary school teachers who noted the benefits of quiet reflection and sensory exploration for young children. Lafayette resident Karen Ward pointed out that passives are not anti-child or anti-Americans with Disabilities, as had been implied. She said that often students from Springstone School or adults from Las Trampas walk

there and that there are many with invisible disabilities currently using the park.

Lafayette resident Mary Jo Cass expressed that everyone is exhausted from this subject, that this is a divided community. She said that social media such as Nextdoor "continues to serve as a pulpit for misinformation." To her the only way forward was to "stop the project tonight" and she suggested instead spending the money on community events such as community gardens and storytelling in the park.

Many actives pointed to what they claim is the current underutilization of the park. Furthermore, Brian Bowman rationalized that the neighborhood is changing with more young families moving in. He questioned the "technicalities of noise" holding the project up and urged the council to move forward.

Still other actives pointed out that whereas they have been compromising on the scale and scoop of the project, the passives have remained unbending. "Let's have a park with something for everyone," said Shannon Cahoon.

All members of the council were in agreement that a decision needed to be reached for the community to move on, although they differed in their opinions. Council

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Member Ivor Samson said he was very disappointed and "appalled by the level of quality of participation" referring to many "nasty in tone comments." He said that in his opinion what is proposed breaks the covenant of the original use.

Council member Mark Mitchell argued that the original intent for the land was to stop development rather than to prevent play equipment.

Council member Cam Burks recognized a shortage of places to go to play for young children and said that they need to move forward, having invested too much time, money and emotion to walk away.

Mayor Mike Anderson emphasized the need to overhaul the noise ordinance separately, something the council agreed on. "We can't have a noise ordinance that precludes children from making normal children sounds," commented Vice Mayor Don Tatzin.

And so the playground inches nearer as a motion passed by three to two for a focused EIR with Anderson, Burks, Mitchell supporting and Samson and Tatzin against.

As Tatzin commented, he has never seen so much effort put into three quarters of an acre.

Orinda

Orinda sinkhole update

The concrete box plan would have qualified as "emergency opening" work, whereas a bridge may be considered "permanent restoration," which would entail lower levels of reimbursement and a longer timeframe for obtaining permits. If the city opts for either a concrete box or a temporary bridge, either may be considered a "betterment" for purposes of federal reimbursement, which means that the city will probably bear the cost of this element of the emergency repair work, and the cost of either the box or a bridge will be higher than that of the pipe. The time frame of the repair depends on resolution of the right-of-entry issue, the type of fix employed and, of course, the weather.

The city is also working on a

number of fronts to ease the difficulties caused by the sinkhole, including efforts to keep the public more informed of the progress of the repair; working on permanent stripping of the detour routes at the significant cost of \$25,000 to \$50,000, which may not be reimbursable; and assisting affected homeowners with their insurance claim forms.

Theis also said EBMUD confirmed it has made a temporary connection from another zone to maintain service for the Los Altos reservoir at the end of Los Altos Dr. in Orinda. The damaged waterline is being maintained with low pressure to prevent contamination of the system. Orinda has received verbal agreement from the California Department of

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Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration that the overall project can proceed under an emergency opening process, which allows the city to bypass some of the regular environmental and design review requirements. The city has obtained the necessary emergency permit from the Army Corps of Engineers to install a new culvert and restore the roadway for traffic.

A community meeting is scheduled to take place at the Sleepy Hollow Elementary School at 6 p.m. on March 14. Theis, Nagel and Interim City Manager Steve Salomon will provide updates on the progress on the project and provide information on additional safety measures that will be put into place due to the detours.

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