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Letters to the Editor

Yes on L is best option

Yes on Measure L is Lafayette's best option. It's the safest way to protect against high-density development and unbearable traffic gridlock at Deer Hill and Pleasant Hill Road across from Acalanes High School.

I don't always agree with our City Council, but this time I do. City leaders are NOT engaging in scare tactics. If Measure L is defeated, the developer can revive her application for the Terraces of Lafayette 315-unit apartment project originally filed in 2011. That project would bring much greater density and traffic headaches than the 44 Homes at Deer Hill which will be built if Measure L passes.

I'm keenly aware of the Deer Hill issues. I first became involved in 2009-2010, when I attended numerous public meetings urging the city to rezone the parcel from APO (35 units/acre) to Low-Density Residential (1 unit/5 acres). The city ultimately agreed to rezoning but never implemented the change. Thus, zoning remains APO. I'm voting Yes on L because I agree with Lafayette residents who want to keep this parcel as low density as possible.

Regarding sports field health concerns: one solution is to restrict youth-league use to weekends, when vehicle emissions are low and demand for fields is high.

Regarding future development if Measure L fails: Save Lafayette and Measure L opponents overlook that the housing crisis is impacting California legislation. New laws are trending toward less local control, more streamlined approval of high-density, low-to-moderate-income projects, and more relaxed environmental standards. In the past, Lafayette possibly could have denied the 315-unit Terraces project based on adverse environmental and traffic impacts. But laws are changing. Read Government Code section 65589.5, which restricts a city's ability to reject high-density, low-to-moderate-income projects. Read the MacArthur Transit Project's EIR (24-story, 400-unit project adjacent to highway 24, despite vehicle pollution and traffic congestion). Read the LA Times Dec. 27, 2017 article about California Air Resources Board now emphasizing design (rather than distance from freeway) to reduce housing health risk.

Given ongoing changes in the law, it's too risky to reject Measure L. Yes on L (44 homes on 22 acres) is our best compromise solution.

Linda Murphy
Lafayette

BART Projects

The continuing project at the parking lot at the Lafayette BART station began in June 2017. It was supposed to take eight months. At the time of writing BART could not give the date it will be completed.

At the April 23 Lafayette City Council meeting a presentation was made regarding the next project BART have in mind for the other side of the station, the City side. Along with a variety of special features, such as public art, the plan includes the removal of 14 much needed parking spaces. Once again the public is to be subjected to watch BART spend money on projects which are non essential, instead of using the money to make the trains and stations safe and clean for the riders.

When will we see the day when BART starts to get it's priorities right?

Ann Burns
Lafayette

No on L

Although I am a member of the Lafayette City Council, I am writing this letter in my capacity as a private citizen. From comments I have heard and questions that I have been asked, I believe that the following points need to be clarified:

* The Lafayette City Council voted 4 - 1 to have the election on Measure L in June. I voted against an early election because I don't think a hasty campaign gives time for reasoned decision making nor for the parties to try and formulate a reasonable settlement for the benefit of our community.

* The City Council has not, and by law cannot, take a position on Measure L. Four Councilmembers - in their individual capacities - have chosen to support YES; I have decided not to do so.

After much deliberation, I have decided to support the NO position. I believe that there are major problems with the proposed development, both legally and factually. This referendum is being rushed through without sufficient time to thoroughly and thoughtfully consider major issues. For example:

* what precedent will this project have on how traffic and hillsides protection are considered in future applications?

* have other potential sports field sites been summarily dismissed without proper vetting?

* given the unresolved air quality issues, doesn't prudence dictate caution when dealing with children's health and safety?

* is a smaller scale development with a significant component of affordable housing a better use of the site and better public policy?

Despite the simplistic rhetoric proffered by both sides in this campaign, the issues involved, both legal and factual, are complicated and nuanced. There is merit in both positions, and we must recognize the good faith belief of our neighbors who hold differing positions. Nobody can guarantee any outcome and it is sophistry to pretend to do so. I believe that a NO on L is legally sound, reflects our historic land use policies and provides greater opportunity for reasonable development of affordable housing. Are there questions and uncertainties associated with a NO vote? Absolutely, but I believe that the identified legal uncertainties and the factual problems associated with a YES vote are substantial. I believe that a NO vote will better serve both the historic goals of our community as well as better position us for future challenges.

Ivor E. Samson
Lafayette CA

A Line In The Sand

I applaud the MOFD Board for drawing a line in the sand with regards to spending Orinda's tax dollars in Orinda for emergency services which the voters were promised would be the case when they were asked in 1997 if they wanted to partner with Moraga to form MOFD. I am talking about the Board not agreeing to spend Orinda tax dollars for its share of a proposed \$4,000 Moraga sewer tax. Since Orinda tax payers provide 65 percent of MOFD's \$25 million of property tax revenue, they would be paying \$2,600 of that Moraga sewer tax. Now maybe the Board can focus on the remaining \$3 million dollars a year which Orinda tax payers are sending to MOFD to subsidize the cost of Moraga's emergency services. Orinda represents about 53 percent of MOFD's service area, both by population and number of firefighters stationed in and serving each community. But by providing 65 percent of MOFD's revenue, Orinda taxpayers are effectively subsidizing one quarter of the cost of the service to Moraga. This was never envisioned by either community when MOFD was formed.

Steve Cohn
Orinda

Editor's Note:

In the letter, "A line in the sand," the proposed stormwater fee for MOFD's two Moraga parcels is \$2,540, according to MOFD. Since Orinda taxpayers provide 65 percent of MOFD's \$25 million of property tax revenue, they would be paying \$1,651 of that Moraga sewer tax.

Support of Orinda Library

Since taking up genealogical research, I've spent many hours in libraries across the country and have come to appreciate even more the valuable services they provide. Whether searching for clues to my family's roots or introducing my grandchildren to a favorite children's book, I'm continually struck by the vast resources libraries hold.

Of course, all those resources are of little use if the doors are locked. Measure J will ensure that our Orinda Library can remain open seven days a week; without Measure J funds, library hours will be cut almost in half to a mere 35 hours a week. This parcel tax measure also provides funds for on-going maintenance that can be used only for the library.

An additional \$30 per year is a small price to pay to maintain such a valuable community service. Please join me in voting Yes on Measure J for our library.

Vanessa Crews
Orinda

Proposed sports field at Deer Hill

More sports fields are needed in Lafayette but the proposed Deer Hill site is the wrong project in the wrong place. The intersection at Deer Hill and Pleasant Hill Roads is incredibly congested. City employee, James Hinkamp, recently referred to Pleasant Hill Road as "the busiest road in Lafayette".

The field would be inaccessible to many. The access points are: a small drop-off circle with handicap parking up Deer Hill and stairs which ascend the hill from the lower parking lot up to the sports field. How would the mom pushing a stroller access the field to watch her child play? If not handicapped, she'd need to park in the lower lot and climb the stairs with the stroller. I know some moms like a good challenge but count me out on that one.

If you haven't enjoyed a late afternoon/evening rush hour drive on Deer Hill, I recommend it. You'll have plenty of time to take in the scenery as you crawl along. As you're enjoying the drive try to envision soccer practice letting out at about 5 p.m. Moms will be backed up in both directions to pick up their children in the small turnaround on Deer Hill. Why wouldn't they park their cars and climb the stairs with the stroller to pick up their child from practice? See above.

There's a better site for the proposed sports field at Deer Hill and the City of Lafayette already owns the land - the Lafayette Community Park.

I've walked the Lafayette Community Park fields four times in the last few weeks. My walking partners have included community members and two City Council members. All agree there is room for another field and additional parking with a thoughtful reconfiguration of the existing park. The City plans to contribute \$3million to the proposed sports field and amenities at Deer Hill. A turf field costs roughly \$1million to install. The Lafayette Community Park would be a more logical location for that turf field and a more fiscally responsible decision for Lafayette taxpayers.

Jean Follmer
Lafayette

Yes on J

My husband and I recently moved back to Orinda and couldn't be happier to be a part of this community that values libraries and learning. Having grown up in Orinda, I am the beneficiary of the community spirit that has given us excellent schools and a beautiful library. Now, with two small boys, I look forward to giving them the same. That is why my husband and I will be voting Yes on Measure J to support the Orinda Library.

Measure J adds just \$30 per year to our taxes, but gives the community so much more in return. It's such a small price to pay it forward to the families and children who will live, learn, and thrive in our community.

Betsy and Dana Ream
Orinda

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