

# Civic News



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## 2 Great Properties Coming in Early 2011!

- #1 **Lafayette Woodlands** – Charming  
 2-story farmhouse never before on market!  
 4BD/3.5BA, 3125 sq. ft. on .92-acre lot
- #2 **Lafayette Woodlands** – Private  
 split-level, oak-studded contemporary with pool!  
 4BD/3BA, 2937 sq. ft. on 1.03-acre lot



# Lafayette

## Budget Adjustments Weighed by City Council

By Cathy Tyson

Although for each of the last twenty years Lafayette proudly had a balanced budget, the second half of the current fiscal year and the trend for the next five years is not so rosy. Clearly not to the degree of the Federal and State budget woes – but Lafayette is projected to have a deficit of \$550,000. To maintain a balanced budget, cuts of this amount will need to be made from the General Fund.

“Tracy Robinson (Administrative Services Director) and I looked carefully at revenue and expenditures. Revenue is expected to grow at 2% and expenses to grow at 3% - this is just not sustainable,” said City Manager Steven Falk. “We believe the City needs a course correction - with changes phased in between now and June of 2011.”

With a reserve account balance of \$9.3 million dollars – the equivalent of 91% of the General Fund budget – the city is still in very good shape in case of earthquake, wildfire or flood. It seems like only yesterday, but in fiscal year 2009/2010 the budget had a surplus of \$219,000 that was added to the reserve fund.

The biggest piece of the annual budget pie, 44%, is spent on police services contracted from the County. It's no secret that there is a very large looming unfunded pension obligation for these officers; staff believes its “prudent” to assume that those costs will be passed through to Lafayette.

Although nothing has been decided, six opportunities for sav-

ings that would total \$550,000 were suggested to the City Council on November 8.

Two motorcycles are cheaper than one police dog and canine officer. It may sound harsh but, “the dog is at the end of its service life,” according to a staff report. Because 73% of canine calls are outside the area, staff suggested two motorcycles could be purchased for existing police officers to better patrol the narrow, winding streets of Lafayette. This would produce ongoing annual savings of \$225,000.

No major new projects in town equal, potentially, no Community Development Director. This position could be replaced by a part time Special Projects Manager. This would save \$86,500.

Chamber proponents and business owners were not thrilled with the proposed elimination of city funded promotional expenses, for example banners and twinkle lights along with police and public works support of the Art & Wine Festival and the Reservoir Run. This could save the city \$80,000. “Nobody likes to see these gone, but it's hard to argue that twinkle lights are a core service of the city,” said Falk. For the record, twinkle lights will be on this holiday season.

Changes to Planning staff could save \$60,000, stretching time between landscape trimming and clean up would save \$50,000. Higher use fees for ballfield users and recreation classes could save \$35,000 and miscellaneous administrative changes could save

\$11,000. These suggested changes equal \$547,500, very close to the target amount of \$550,000.

The final city budget will be presented at the December 13 City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the

Lafayette Library and Learning Center's Community Hall. Public input is always welcome. These staff suggestions could be accepted, rejected or adjusted at that time.

### Public Meetings

**City Council** Monday, December 13, 7:00 pm  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

**Planning Commission** Monday, November 29, 7:00 pm  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

**Design Review** Monday, December 13, 7:00 pm  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center in the Arts & Science Discovery Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
 City of Lafayette: [www.ci.lafayette.ca.us](http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us)  
 Chamber of Commerce: [www.lafayettechamber.org](http://www.lafayettechamber.org)

### Police Report



**Not Your Average Dog Sitter**, 11/10/10 Lafayette Police responded to a burglar alarm on Sundale Road and discovered a 22-year-old El Sobrante woman inside the home. Although a 12" x 12" glass panel from a window was resting against the side wall of the home, the woman stated she was there to check on her aunt's sick dog. Police were not able to verify her intriguing story and discovered \$3,500 of stolen items nearby. The items were returned to the homeowner and the burglar was given a lift to the Martinez Detention Facility. Nice try.

**How Badly Can One Need a Drink?** 11/10/10 Lafayette Police arrested a Martinez woman for stealing \$102.65 worth of alcohol from Trader Joe's. The would-be thief quickly admitted to stealing the booze and a background check revealed she was already on probation. The police report didn't indicate what type of alcoholic beverage the woman was intent on enjoying but it's fun to envision the possibility that she had over two cases of "three buck

chuck" stuffed into her clothing.

**Stanley Teacher's Keys Found by Police** 11/11/10 A group of kids gained access to Stanley during a school holiday using a missing set of teacher keys. The group was discovered and a 15-year-old Acalanes student ran from the scene and was later found at his home. The missing keys were discovered in the boy's backpack and he claimed responsibility for possessing them. The 15-year-old was taken to the Lafayette Police Department and released to his mother and the other kids were released to their parents at the school. The case was forwarded to Youth Diversion Services Officer Berch Parker for follow-up. Sounds like a little more parental supervision on days off could be in order...

**Bar Fight at the Roundup** 11/14/10 A Walnut Creek resident was arrested for battery when he caused serious bodily injury to an Oakley man during a fight at the Roundup. The victim lost consciousness after being punched and kicked by the Walnut Creek resident and another unidentified suspect. The victim was transported to John Muir Hospital for treatment and the thug was given a ride to the Martinez Detention Facility.

### Chamber of Commerce Reacts to Proposed Budget Cuts

No sooner did city staff inform the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce of the proposed \$80,000 in reductions to city-funded promotional expenses, was the business community stung again by the announcement of a further decline in sales tax revenue.

“Some of the city's support of the downtown climate and events is arguably not essential,” says Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson, “but if sales are down, is it a good time to cut the funding? The city should respond to the sales tax downturn with more measures to stimulate the local economy, not fewer.”

Events such as the Art and Wine Festival and the Reservoir Run, which have received city support in the past, are good examples of the situation's complexity. According to Lifson, the amount of money contributed by the city is roughly equivalent to donations the Chamber makes each year to local schools and community groups from the event proceeds; funding cuts could mean an end to those donations.

Lifson reported that the Chamber has received numerous letters opposing the reductions – the Lafayette Partners in Education voiced its concern, as did the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation; many small and large business owners, as well as residents, expressed worries not only about the loss of Chamber donations but also about compromising the city's dynamic image.

Nevertheless, a solution must be found. Lifson said one of the city's suggestions is the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID), funded by a business tax, which would take charge of certain tasks currently managed by the Chamber. He does not support this idea, noting, “If we had a BID, for which businesses had to pay, it is likely that they would significantly reduce their support of the Chamber.”

The discussions between the city and the Chamber are ongoing. “There will be some trade-offs,” said Lifson, “and we want to be part of the solution.”

S.Braccini



# Christmas CA\$H for your Holiday \$pending

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