

## Civic News Lafayette

### Book Bargains this Saturday



Hardworking "Friends" volunteers Pam Locati and Glenda Fillinger show off some of the merchandise. Photo Cathy Tyson

A value at twice the price, all John Grishams will be \$1. Ditto for Ann Packer, Lee Child and Stephen King, not to mention children's books, the entire young adult collection, and all non-fiction like gardening and travel books – these popular, gently used books that normally sell for \$2 will be marked down to \$1.

This Saturday is the Lafayette Friends Corner Book Shop Half Price Sale. With over 20,000 titles and all proceeds benefitting the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation, readers can stock up this St. Patrick's Day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The surprisingly large, well organized shop is located at the corner of Golden Gate Way and First Street, on the lower level of the Library. Come early for best selection. Avid readers looking to do a little spring cleaning and recycling are always welcome to donate their gently used books. C. Tyson

### Downtown Plan Rolling Toward Completion

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In its latest letter to the Planning Commission, it notes the multiplicity of documents that comprise the Final EIR – the January 2010 Draft EIR, the August 2010 document titled "Final EIR" the EIR consultant's November memorandum and more. In addition, nineteen pages of very specific comments were attached.

Mitigation measures described in the environmental report, and discussed at the meeting, are challenging - even using sophisticated modeling analysis for anticipated

traffic, air quality and parking impacts - especially without an actual building or buildings to assess. Most importantly, the worst case scenario is used for analysis. While there is generalized concern about the impacts of future growth, depending on the economic climate in the years to come, development may happen more slowly than anticipated.

Current and future developments already are required to go through the design review process; that won't change if the Downtown Specific

Plan is, or isn't, adopted.

"The methodology is very conservative – it doesn't take into account the discretionary process and CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) review. There are already mechanisms in place that the city has always used," said Community Development Director Ann Merideth. To clarify the proposed DSP, Commissioner Mark Mitchell asked, "So the DSP has no greater impact than the (existing) General Plan?" Staff answered, "Yes."

### Water Facility Negotiations Continue

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He obviously has a vested interest in keeping the business that's been in the family for generations thriving. "It's really going to be tough to do business (during construction), we're bracing ourselves – it's hard enough in this tough economy," he said.

At issue is the fact that EBMUD is "fully autonomous" said Bill Fitzpatrick, Manager of Water Distribution Planning. While the Planning Commission and City Council can offer suggestions on the size and design of the new pumping plant, EBMUD, because it's a utility, is not required to conform to the city's

wishes. However the city may have some key leverage; City Council Member Don Tatzin pointed out that the city is not required to swap or sell the parcel to the utility.

Looking to be collaborative and working in good faith, discussions between the City and EBMUD are ongoing about how to memorialize what both parties want. Blodgett is especially concerned about access and visibility from Mt. Diablo Boulevard, and would prefer that the portion of the right-of-way land directly in front of his store remain vacant. "I'd prefer a low building and low landscaping,"

he said.

"This plant is our number one priority," said Kirkpatrick describing the project. Just this past week there was a field trip to the property with EBMUD's architect and landscape designers. "We fully intend to work with neighbors," he added. They will be reaching out to the community to discuss concerns and recognize priorities. "My hope is this is very good project for everyone," Kirkpatrick said. Check the city website at www.lovelafayette.com for future Planning Commission meetings discussing the proposed pumping plant.

### Chief Retires, but Bigger Pension Sustainability Questions Remain

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While city leaders wish him well and thanked him for his years of service, Chief Hubbard is just one of many County employees who will retire in the years to come. It's no secret that Contra Costa and many other counties are facing some harsh budget realities in accommodating current workers pensions. Contra Coast County recently completed negotiations that will help address the situation.

While Lafayette's retirement plan is sustainable, Contra Costa County is struggling under the weight of \$1.7 billion in unfunded pension liabilities. Part of the problem is spelled out in the CCCERA handbook, "This means your future retirement benefit is not based on how much you and your employer contribute, investment returns, or other factors that could cause your pension value to fluctuate." Perhaps that sounded like a good idea back in 1937, on the heels of the depression, with the County Employees Retirement Act – that was adopted locally in 1945, but questionable now.

At issue is employee's spiking their pensions with cash payouts in lieu of unused vacation time and bonuses. CCCERA pensions are calculated by taking the monthly base salary for the highest 12 consecutive

months, plus vacation accruals, plus holiday compensation to equal total final average salary. An employee's average final monthly salary is multiplied by years of retirement service credit and multiplied again by age at retirement factor. In addition, there are regular cost of living adjustments, determined by the Association's Retirement Board, not to exceed 3% per year.

While CalPERS, the state's largest public employee retirement system banned salary spiking in 1993, Contra Costa just recently disallowed the practice for new hires. With more than four hundred former employees in Contra Costa County receiving annual pensions of \$100,000 and more, it's no wonder the County itself described the pension system as "in crisis." In a May 2010 presentation produced by Contra Costa County, entitled Pension 101, administrators noted the County's pension obligation will increase dramatically in the next five to seven years, and will require an additional \$59 million contribution each year after 2015, due to stock market losses. Almost two years after that presentation, financial adjustments have modified those projections.

"Contra Costa County has nego-

tiated a number of significant changes to wages and benefits for our County employees," explained County Administrator David Twa. "For most staff members, these reductions have averaged 5% of their total compensation. While this has been painful for all the employees impacted, it has allowed the County to structurally balance our budget for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1, 2012. This means we are not expecting any additional layoffs, nor are we expecting any further cuts in services to the public for 2012/13."

Director of Public Affairs for the Office of the Sheriff, Jimmy Lee, described more changes, "Newly hired employees are not allowed to use vacation pay to spike their pensions, and instead of 3% at 50, the new formula is 3% at 55."

Locals may recall the brouhaha back in 2009 when Moraga-Orinda Fire District Pete Nowicki Chief retired with a \$240,000 per year salary for life. He had been earning \$186,000 prior to his retirement, but was able to substantially boost that amount by adding vacation buy-back and service credits.

Because Chief Hubbard is still working, his pension has not yet been calculated, noted Lee.

## In Memory

### Florence Gulli Rossi



Florence Gulli Rossi passed away on March 9, 2012 at age 91 after living a full life. Born November 15, 1920 in the beautiful fishing village of Scilla Italy, she grew up close to nature and loving the sea. She came to America with her family and settled in North Beach attending UC Berkeley where she received her M.A in Art and Education. She met the love of her life, John Rossi and together they raised their daughter, Graciella in Orinda. John and Florence had many adventures traveling in their camper and visiting family in Italy. She taught in the public schools for 35 years and devoted fifteen years as the Art Consultant for the Orinda School District. As an accomplished artist, she exhibited her paintings widely, winning many awards. She loved collecting shells on the beach, holding large parties, and helping students find their creative expression.

She is survived by her husband, John Rossi; daughter, Graciella Rossi; son-in-law Richard Spittler, and grandchildren, Elena and Wesley Spittler. Her memorial service will be held on Friday March 16 at 10:30 at Saint Monica's Church in Moraga. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations may be made to Urban Tilth, Art and Nature Education Program in her honor and sent to 5323 Rosalind Ave. Richmond, CA 94805.

### Dr. Victor J. Cabasso



1915 - 2012

Dr. Victor J. Cabasso of Moraga, California, was born in 1915 in Port Said, Egypt, and passed away February 28, 2012, at the age of 96. A research scientist specializing in virology and immunology, he published some 155 articles and book chapters on bacterial and viral infections of humans and animals, including tuberculosis, leprosy, trachoma, typhus, canine distemper, measles, mumps, polio, rubella, and viral hepatitis, among others. He developed several human and animal

vaccines currently in use and held ten medical patents. He was a member of numerous prestigious professional societies including the New York Academy of Sciences, the New York Academy of Medicine, the American and Northern California Societies of Microbiology, and the International Association of Biological Standardization, was an honorary member of the American Veterinary Medical Association, and served on committees of the National Academy of Science and National Science Foundation.

Early in his career, Dr. Cabasso was a research fellow at the Pasteur Institute in Paris in 1939. During the turbulent years of World War II, he had to flee the Nazis to pursue his education. He earned a Doctor of Science degree in 1941 from the Sorbonne and the University of Algiers, and was a research fellow at the Pasteur Institute in Tunis from 1940-1944. From 1944 to 1946, he served with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Middle East and Greece Missions as head of the department of bacteriology and laboratories.

He came to the United States in 1946 at the invitation of a US Army officer, a fellow scientist and a physician, who recognized that Dr. Cabasso's unique expertise in the emerging science of virology would make an invaluable contribution to public health in the United States. Dr. Cabasso became a naturalized US citizen in 1958. From 1946 to 1967, he was research virologist and then head of virus immunological research for Lederle Laboratories, Pearl River, New York. He was a pioneer in the development of an oral polio vaccine in the early 1950s, and he led a team that developed numerous important human and veterinary vaccines and sera, some of which are still in use today. From 1967 to 1980, he was director of microbiology research and subsequently director and vice president of research and development at Cutter Laboratories (now Bayer AG) in Emeryville, California. At Cutter and its successor, Bayer AG, he and his team were very involved in developing treatments, now in use, for Hepatitis B in humans.

An avid reader, traveler, photographer and gardener, after retiring from Bayer AG, Dr. Cabasso became an active community volunteer, teaching French literature at area middle and high schools, and serving on the Board of Directors of the Moraga Public Library. Dr. Cabasso spoke more than six languages. He was also an artist. His dozens of colorful latch-hook tapestries, with designs drawn from sources as varied as Chinese flowers, tropical fish, and electron microscopic images of viruses, have been displayed in several local galleries and exhibitions.

Dr. Cabasso is survived by his wife of nearly 64 years, Anna, a native of New Jersey whom he met in New York City and married in 1948; his daughter Jacqueline, of Oakland, California, an internationally known peace and anti-nuclear activist; and his son Phillip, an internal medicine physician and jazz musician, who with his wife Cheryl Barnes, a widely respected jazz vocalist, lives in Sierra Madre, California.

A family celebration of his life will be scheduled.

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorindaweekly.com