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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I recently attended a meeting at St. Mary's College hosted by State Senator Mark DeSaulnier. I expected it to be the typical political meeting where you write questions on white cards and then the staff can remove any that are too critical. It wasn't anything like that. Each attendee was given a full page to ask questions, make suggestions, and even complain. My complaint was that the legislature isn't doing enough to solve the problem of excessive, underfunded, public employee pension plans. (A good start would be to adopt the Governors 12 point plan). Each attendee, in the order that they arrived at the meeting, was allowed to talk privately one on one with the Senator. He made me feel at ease and I didn't pull any punches. He gave me all the time I needed and we had a great two way conversation. We even discussed the need for a rainy day fund. Only time will tell whether he is willing and/or able to implement my suggestions but I certainly must give him credit for coming to Moraga and being willing to listen to the concerns of ordinary citizens.

Pete Williams

Moraga

Editor:

This is a testimony in support of Sustainable Lafayette. I heard the presentation at the Lafayette Library on Aug. 28 and was appalled to hear of the threat to California's state parks, but preferred not to lengthen the event with my personal input. Reaching a larger audience by the printed word seemed preferable.

I came to California from Switzerland at the age of 28. I panned for gold in the Yuba river, rattled my way to Bodie along the washboard road, sat on Devil's Post Pile, climbed Mt. Ritter and walked, yes, walked to the top of Mt Whitney. Having come from a country where one could hardly climb a hill or mountain without reaching a coffeehouse, a bar, a restaurant or hotel, I was taken by the beauty of a land where no shelter more permanent than a tent was permissible. This was a land where I wanted to live and grow old; I did and I am.

I now live on Happy Valley Road across from a hillside of "virgin" oak trees, where foxes and deer roam freely and forage on my roses unless I remember to close the gate. This is a land whose beauty deserves preservation and where unlimited encroachment by civilization needs to be contained.

Jurij Hostynek

Lafayette

Editor:

Here is how to solve the pension problem with the fire district. First, do not vote for any additional taxes to fund the district. The fire district said that if we do not vote for the tax increase, they will shut down up to half of the fire stations.

Once these stations are closed and half the fire fighters are laid off, wait one week. Then put an advertisement out to hire new fire fighters. Offer \$65,000 per year with a pension at 60 years old that will be equal to what a person in the private sector will get on social security at 66 years old. Offer medical until age 65.

We will thus dramatically reduce the cost of pensions. The police department will probably have to increase crowd control expenses temporarily as the amount of people applying for these jobs will be overwhelming.

John Briggs

Lafayette

Election 2012

Lafayette

Editor:

In 2 decades of organized taxpayer advocacy at Lafayette and County levels., it's been a personal point of "campaign activity" to separately treat "candidate and tax measures", separately. However, given disastrous states of both political and financial matters, at virtually every level of government (Lafayette, gladly not an example), it's this writer's belief that such "segregation," need no longer be mandatory "taxpayer advocate policy". Thus for the first time, publicly expressed endorsements for candidates City Council and Lafayette School District are being offered.. And, if a respected media outlet like the "Weekly" can accommodate such reasoning, here is the "logic" underlying the endorsements:

Traci Reilly

Traci's Council candidacy, is another example of how Lafayette's first City Manager, and "architect" of its unique "3 Ps governing structure, has prompted talented volunteers like Traci, to volunteer for services otherwise provided by taxpayer funded personnel.

Traci's been Chair and member of the Crime Prevention Commission - plus, serving boards and committees of local

public schools, including Acalanes Parent Liason Class of 2016. Her broader qualifications are efforts to implement the "roads problems resolution", including more General Funds expenditures for roads...all, reflecting her focus on City financial efficiency.

Mike Anderson

Mike, as Council incumbent, has brought great education and executive experiences to the Council. He's strongly reflected citizen voices re "policy requirements" to Staff - especially beyond "Council 3Ps-basics" of Public Safety, Planning and Public Works - those, the priorities of Lafayette's volunteer citizenry...growth, safety, property values, etc. Mike brings this strong "citizen functions" priorities, to what may be one of best run government-operated California public park systems. A vote to continue his Council seat is continuing "Lafayette good news".

Mark Mitchell

Mark is a great rarity - grew up here, local schools, etc.. And, with his work in property management/ real estate, he brings efficiencies and expertise, that hired staff would otherwise be funded for. As his long part of great "town helpers", Mark's helped make Lafayette such a great place for the rest of us. And, as Lafayette faces inevitable dictates like "Downtown Strategic Planning", it will be a bonus to have a council member who brings insights to all the impacts which such activities produce.

Jean Follmer

Endorsing Jean for a seat on Lafayette School Board, is as easy as choices re the above elected City office seekers. I endorse her especially for her keen awareness of California's declined education quality. She favors education reform of teacher assessment and retention - and supports thoughtfully, targeted funding. Her business background, extensive school volunteer experience and fiscally conservative approach, bring needed insight to the current board. Jean understands that reform must begin at the local level."

Finally, as noted initially, taxpayer advocacy group members don't typically comment on elected official campaigns. But, it's increasingly clear in today's environment, priorities and positions of elected officials, almost totally dictate quality of social and cultural environments - and, in equal context, efficient and properly focused use of taxpayer-provided funding.

Just be sure to "vote Yes for Mike Anderson, Traci Reilly, Mark Mitchell, and Jean Follmer."

Don Lively
Lafayette

Editor,

Jean Follmer, Lafayette School District Board candidate, has our enthusiastic endorsement in the upcoming November 6 election.

Jean comes to this election with no personal agenda. She is focused on what is in the best interest of all students. Jean believes that every student should benefit from an exceptional educational experience that best fits their abilities and needs.

Jean understands that our schools are an important consideration when people choose to make Lafayette their home. Like us, Jean moved to Lafayette for its excellent schools. She understands the current financial crisis in Sacramento and how this impacts our schools and tirelessly does her best to be a part of the solution. Jean is a true advocate who can be found attending not only local school board and parent club meetings, but seminars and forums on education related topics all around the Bay Area.

What impresses us most about Jean is the way she always leads by example. Jean has served, and continues to serve, the Lafayette community in numerous ways. To highlight a few, both past and present: President, Springhill Parent Faculty Club; Board Member, Lafayette Community Foundation; Board Member, Lafayette Partners in Education; Girl Scout Leader; Board Member, Lafayette Swim Conference (LMYA representative); and Co-Founder, Lafayette for Education, a grassroots group that seeks sustainable funding for California schools.

Jean is a terrific leader who is committed to serving our community and will do so with great integrity and the highest professionalism.

Please join us in casting your vote for Jean Follmer for Lafayette School District Governing Board - a vote for our children, our schools, and our community. You can be confident that you made the right choice.

Sincerely,
Jenifer and Benjamin Paul
Lafayette

Moraga

Editor:

Moraga needs a Town Council that Will Protect Open Space

The recent approval of Hetfield Estates once again shows that Moraga's open space is not adequately protected. Although Moraga's General Plan clearly states its intent to protect steep and unstable hillsides from development, Moraga's officials continue to approve developments that threaten the Town's beautiful natural setting.

Most recently, the Planning Commission approved a new residential development in designated open space: this time it's seven 4,000 square foot homes to be constructed on top of a series of landslides off of Sanders Drive. Building on landslides requires massive remedial grading, which the General Plan and the Moraga Open Space Ordinance (MOSO) clearly says to minimize. Why then did the Planning Commission approve a development with more than twice the number of houses than the applicant was entitled to under MOSO?

And last year, the Town Council, by a 2-1 vote, approved the 27-home Rancho Laguna II development on the

beautiful open space on the east side of Rheem Blvd, between St. Mary's Road and Moraga Rd. This development will cut 30 feet off the top of Rheem Ridge! In 2008, Karen Mendonca ran on a clear platform to protect remaining open space and ridgelines, but when given an opportunity to do so, she actually ended up the swing vote and approved this ridgeline development.

The decision to build these homes continues to set precedent for allowing large McMansions on our remaining semi-rural hillsides and ridgelines.

We count on our town officials to protect our Town's semi-rural character for future generations to enjoy. Further, it is up to the Town Council to adopt clear hillside and ridgeline policies, and yet the last meeting the Council held on this important topic was in the spring of 2008-more than four years ago!

This is not a matter of stopping all development in Moraga. In fact, more than 1100 new homes are proposed or have already been approved. Many will be built once the economy turns around.

Please look carefully at who is running for the three open Town Council seats this November, and cast your vote wisely. Please select a candidate that we know will represent us on this important issue and has a proven record of voting to protect open space and ridgelines. Once our remaining hillsides and ridgelines are built they are gone forever.

Lynda Deschambault
Moraga

Orinda

Editor:

New leadership is needed in Orinda -- leadership that will preserve Orinda's unique environment and truly fix the city's miserable roads.

Ms. Linda Delehunt, an Orinda resident, is running for the Orinda City Council and offers a fresh perspective. Ms. Delehunt supports keeping Orinda's unique semi-rural, village-like atmosphere intact.

Sadly, Ms. Delehunt's two opponents for the city council, Mr. Steve Glazer and Ms. Victoria Smith -- both are incumbent city council members running for re-election -- have embraced a plan that will drastically alter Orinda's downtown environment. The plan will permit a massive housing project to be built in the middle of downtown. In December, ground-breaking will occur at 2 Irwin Way (across from the Safeway and Citibank) for a 67-unit housing complex that will tower over existing buildings in the neighborhood and spoil views of the surrounding hills. The housing complex will have room for about 30 vehicles. Beautiful trees will be cut down.

The housing complex will increase downtown's notorious traffic and parking problems.

In February 2008, the typical garbage pick-up rate in Orinda was \$66.00. Today, that rate is \$94.80 -- a staggering 44 percent increase! Both Glazer and Smith are members of the Contra Costa County Solid Waste Authority, the body that set garbage rates for Orinda. Orindans may want to ask themselves if their pay has gone up 44 percent since 2008

Ms. Delehunt wants a comprehensive plan to fix Orinda's roads. Glazer and Smith are supporting a November ballot measure to raise Orinda's sales tax from 8.25 percent to 8.75 percent. The tax increase is expected to generate \$600,000 for road repair. The estimated cost of fixing Orinda's bad roads is \$60 million. Thus, \$600,000 will generate only one percent of the money needed.

Ms. Delehunt believes that the proposed higher sales tax will hurt small businesses, kill jobs, and not generate the funds needed for road repair.

Please vote for Ms. Delehunt on election day, November 6.

Richard S. Colman
Orinda

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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