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Letters to the Editor



Share your thoughts with our community!
 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. **email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com;** Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

The personal e-mails of Orinda City Council member Sue Severson to and from a developer, concerning a desirable parcel in Orinda Village, have been publicized. The other council members just unanimously elected her to be our next mayor.

These e-mails preceded a tumultuous drafting of Orinda's Housing Element. An extremely problematic draft in June, written without any public input, enticed several hundred outraged citizens to attend city council meetings. Many Orindans concerned with preserving the semi-rural character of the city and initiating transparency in City Hall commented publicly and wrote detailed letters. Twelve hundred citizens signed a petition opposing this early draft. A recurrent complaint was that Orinda conceded more than was legally required. Initially, City Council and staff ignored and then insulted these Orinda residents, referring to us as misinformed and paranoid. Eventually, some of our edits were incorporated into the lengthy document. However, the final draft adopted by City Council contains statements that could make Orinda susceptible to manipulation by developers. They are counting on the fact that Orindans are too busy with families and careers to pay attention to these arcane issues. If you cherish our semi-rural character or just want to have a say in our destiny, stay informed by attending council meetings or listening to the recorded audio afterward. Join a citizen group that focuses on Orinda affairs. Then, have your voice heard by writing e-mails to council members or speaking at council meetings.

Bruce London
 Orinda

Join our Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to **letters@lamorindaweekly.com** and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum.

Civic News Lafayette

Much Smaller Terraces Development Proposed

... continued from page A2

The signs of a pending denial were hard to miss. Recently the Design Review Commission sent their recommendation not to support the project to the Planning Commission; that, coupled with the 13 significant and unavoidable impacts noted in the Environmental Impact Report, made an official denial of the project, and thus the possible lawsuit, a near guarantee.

Looking for a better solution, the developer and the City Council came together to find something that would be acceptable to all parties, including community members. What they came up with delivers single family homes that are consistent with the neighborhood north of the freeway, preserves open space, continues to route traffic away from the Pleasant Hill Road bottleneck, and creates significant public benefit.

Many residents at the meeting were smitten with the Christmas list of public benefit items, especially the all-weather sports field, given the growing number of players in Lafayette and limited existing fields. Additional parking right at the corner of Deer Hill and Pleasant Hill Road is also sorely needed for pick up and

drop off of students and for users of the park facilities.

Deal points include the city purchasing Parcel B for \$1.8 million, "not coincidentally" said Falk, this is the amount the city has already set aside in its parkland acquisition fund. The developer, O'Brien, would use that money to build the above-ground all weather soccer/lacrosse field, dog park, tot-lot and parking lot. The park improvements become the property of the city. Still unanswered is who will pay for maintenance of the amenities.

The alternative plan Falk introduced will be discussed more thoroughly in public meetings on Jan. 13 and 22 at the Veterans Memorial Building. At that juncture, if the City Council wishes to pursue it further, the new proposal will go through the regular review process that includes the Circulation Commission, Design Review, Parks Trails and Recreation Commission and Planning Commission. Councilmember and immediate past mayor Mike Anderson was open to explore this option. "It's foolish not to give this alternative an opportunity." Falk's presentation, deal points, and maps are now posted on www.lovelafayette.org under Hot Topics.

Civic News Moraga

Signs Under Scrutiny

... continued from page A5

Kathe Nelson, the executive director of the chamber of commerce, emphasized the need for the new rules to be equitable and enforceable, with simple standards that are clear and concise. Presently the rules are very difficult to enforce, unless the signs are in the public right of way, be-

cause there is no code enforcement regulation like there is in other jurisdictions.

The revisions will be reviewed by the Planning Commission before being presented for the Town Council's approval early next year.

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