

Election Filing Period Opens Soon

Ever attended a city council meeting and thought to yourself, "If I was sitting in one of those seats I'd ___ (fill in the blank)?" Has a friend suggested that you should be on the school board? Your window of opportunity is about to open.

Lamorinda's heroic elected officials work many hours each month and receive no pay. Some serve to give back to their communities, others want to make a difference – it can be a very rewarding experience. But these jobs also require something of a thick skin because, to twist a phrase, you will never please all of the people even some of the time.

The general rules for candidates are that you must be 18 years old by the next election, a citizen of the U.S., a registered voter in the district or city you wish to run for, and you must have not been convicted of designated crimes as specified in the state constitution and laws.

The candidate filing period opens July 14 and closes Aug. 8. If one, or more, incumbent does not file nomination papers, the filing period is ex-

tended to Aug. 13. Candidates must file in person at the cognizant office.

If you are running for a special district or a school district, the County Elections Office is your filing office. Candidates for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board or one of the four school boards should file at 555 Escobar Street, Martinez. For information, call (925) 335-7874 or go to www.covote.us.

If you are seeking public office in a city or town, the city clerk is your filing office and appointments are recommended.

Lafayette: City Clerk Joanne Robbins, 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd., (925) 299-3210, jrobbins@love-lafayette.org.

Moraga: Town Clerk Marty McInturf, 329 Rheem Blvd., (925) 888-7022, mmcinturf@moraga.ca.us.

Orinda: City Clerk Michele Olsen, 22 Orinda Way, (925) 253-4221, molsen@cityoforinda.org.

The term of service is four years except where noted. The following seats will be up for election Nov. 4:

Acalanes Union High School District Governing Board

Three seats; the incumbents are Susan Epstein, Tom Mulvaney and Richard Whitmore.

Lafayette City Council

Two seats; the incumbents are Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin.

Lafayette School District Governing Board

Three seats; the incumbents are Teresa Gerringer, David Gerson and Art Kapoor.

Orinda City Council

Three seats; the incumbents are Dean Orr, Sue Severson and Amy Worth.

Orinda Union School District Governing Board

Three seats; the incumbents are Julie Rossiter, Christopher Severson and Tyson Krumholtz.

Moraga Town Council

Two seats; the incumbents are Ken Chew and Dave Trotter.

Moraga School District Governing Board

Four seats (one seat has a two-year term); the incumbents are Kathy Ranstrom, Kym Leserman, Charles McNulty and Parker Colvin.

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors

Three seats; the incumbents are Steve Anderson (Division 3, parts of Moraga and Orinda), Kathleen Famulener (Division 1, Moraga) and John Wyro (Division 4, Orinda).

Collected and compiled by Lamorinda Weekly staff writers.

Subtle Differences in Designating Historic Landmarks

By Sophie Braccini

According to the National Registry of Historic Places, "the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved ... in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people." To encourage property owners to preserve a property as a historic landmark the government offers tax credits. To benefit from tax relief, landmarks must go through a review process.

Lafayette and Orinda have ordinances that regulate this process and Moraga is about to approve its own version. But each jurisdiction has specific rules and, although the findings may be similar, what makes a difference is the role property owners play in the process.

"Our ordinance allows both the property owner and the historical society to submit nominations for landmark designation and does not specifically grant the property owner any veto powers over the nomination," said Niroop Srivatsa, Lafayette's planning director. "When the City Council reviews the application, it does not say in the code that the owner can oppose the process, but the council listens to all parties and takes everyone's concern into consideration, including, of course, that of the property owner."

The code also encourages the Lafayette Historical Society to identify those landmarks that would benefit from being acquired by the city to ensure their preservation, according to Srivatsa.

But in Orinda, "The property

owner needs to consent; we can't designate (a historic landmark) if a property owner doesn't want to," said planning director Emmanuel Ursu.

The ordinance that the Moraga Planning Commission recommended for approval to the Moraga Town Council in June also requires the property owner's consent, both at the time a property is nominated as a historic landmark and prior to the council's designation of a landmark. A final decision on the ordinance is expected at the end of the summer.

A historic landmark designation has advantages and constraints. In addition to the federal tax breaks given for maintenance and restoration, property owners can sign a Mills Act Agreement with the city. Orinda is the only Lamorinda jurisdiction that participates in the Mills Act program. "The (Mills Act) contract would reduce the assessed value of the property for tax purposes," explained Ursu. "It is an incentive to maintain, restore and rehabilitate a property." But, he does not know of an existing Mills Act agreement in Orinda.

The flipside of being a historic landmark is that the character of the property must be preserved. "When Town Hall Theatre was flooded a few years ago, we could restore the interior as needed, but we could not change the exterior, including the color of the outside paint," says Mary McCosker, who sits on the board of the Lafayette Improvement Association, which owns the theater, and is

also the president of the Lafayette Historical Society.

The historical society is a big part of the process in Lafayette and the Planning Department asks that property owners wanting to remodel properties of historical interest consult with the historical society – one example is the work currently taking place along Plaza Way. "The owners of the former Pioneer Store on Plaza Way are restoring that strip of buildings, and are working with us, looking at old pictures of the site to preserve the historical character of the landmark as they rebuild it," explained McCosker.

In Lafayette, if the nomination of a property to become a historic landmark is made by the property owner the historical society has a period of six months to investigate and make a recommendation. The Lafayette City Council then conducts a public hearing and provides an opportunity for all interested parties to express their opinions for and against the proposed landmark designation. The final decision is made by the council, which considers a series of criteria that include its historic significance, embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type of specimen, and character as part of the development of the city, among other criteria.

In Orinda the Historic Landmark Committee meets once a month to establish a list of proposed historic landmarks for recommendation to the Planning Commission.

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Price Increase for BART Parking

The early bird catches the coveted asphalt spot

By Cathy Tyson



Cole Martin after a long day at the office, happy that he was able to snag a spot at Orinda BART. Photo C. Tyson

There's only so much supply and lots of demand for parking spots at Lamorinda's two BART stations. Not only do locals have to duke it out with folks from Moraga, but a surprising number of other commuters from Walnut Creek to Pittsburg.

Hard to imagine, but before 2005 parking at BART was free, then it went up to \$1 per day and has been going up ever since. In Lafayette there is additional, if limited, metered street parking. In Orinda there are virtually no street spaces, aside from the overflow lot, a bit of a walk up hill to Santa Maria Way. Both cities strongly discourage BART patrons from parking in residential neighborhoods.

In mid-July parking fees are increasing at Lamorinda's two BART stations by 50 cents per day, bringing both Orinda and Lafayette stations to \$2.50 per day for a parking space, for those who arrive early enough to snag one – generally by 7:30 a.m. While this is cheaper than a Bay Bridge toll which runs from \$4 to \$6 depending on the time of day, and clearly way cheaper than paying for parking in San Francisco, it's not inconsequential. When you add in the fare, workers lucky enough to labor Monday through Friday will spend about \$60 per week just to BART to the office.

BART officials state that parking lot usage is evaluated every six months and if the station is full, then the price for a spot goes up by 50 cents. Revenue generated from new fees will be placed into a special account to be used only for programs for improved station access. A number of patrons would have preferred that revenue be spent to acquire additional parking.

"There are no immediate plans to add parking spaces at the two stations, said BART spokesperson James Allison. "In terms of 'improved station access,' that is a general description of our renewed

efforts to make it easier for customers to get to BART." He clarifies that while that includes park and ride services, there is nothing specific planned at this time for the two Lamorinda stations.

"Because one driver/no passengers vehicles are a key source of greenhouse gas emissions, most of our efforts will be focused on improving bus connectivity, expanding drop off/pick up areas and improving pedestrian and bicycle access," said Allison. One such improvement is shuttle infrastructure upgrading; \$250,000 has been earmarked for designated pickup/drop off locations, signage and shelters to be spent throughout the BART system, along with funds to expand bike storage for up to 20 additional locker spaces in Lafayette and improved pedestrian links at Orinda.

One entrepreneurial homeowner who lives very close to the Lafayette BART station recently advertised a spot in her spacious driveway for \$99 per month on Craigslist. For those locals looking to opt-out of parking, there's always the County Connection, which services both Lamorinda BART stations.

Recent college graduate and Lafayette resident Cole Martin commutes every morning to his job at law firm Gordon & Rees on Battery Street, so he gets off at the Embarcadero station. To be at the office at 8:15 a.m. he usually arrives at BART by 7:30 a.m. He's not too worried about the rate increase and says it won't stop him from driving to the station. Regular commuter Jeremy Hauser of Moraga doesn't start work as an associate at TBWB Strategies in San Francisco until 10 a.m., so the lot is always full for him; he gets a lift from a family friend or takes a taxi.

The good news – weekend parking is still free at both stations. For those looking to purchase a monthly permit it will cost \$84, but that doesn't guarantee a space will be available.

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