



Letters to the Editor

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. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines.

email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570



Editor:

I voted for a Trotter, but I think I got a “can’t-er.” (Sorry, Dave; ‘couldn’t rein-in the horseplay.) Of course, Dave isn’t the problem. He is simply one of tens of thousands of elected and selected officials across the country who (a) can’t see the connection between the problems they deal with and America’s perpetual population growth or (b) can’t admit they see it, because they (c) can’t see what they can do about it.

When we moved to Lamorinda in 1966, the population of the U.S., California, and Contra Costa County were approximately 197 million, 19 million, and 0.5 million, respectively. Today, the corresponding numbers are approximately 320 million, 34 million, and 1.1 million. In other words, Contra Costa County’s population has grown approximately 55 percent in that period and Lamorinda’s population is over 60 thousand and growing. Any wonder why Lamorinda

commute times might be getting longer, parking spaces might be getting costlier, buildings might be getting bigger, open space might be getting smaller, water supplies might be getting tighter, and so on and on and on?

Perhaps it’s time for all the “can’t-ers” across the country – and in Lamorinda – to become “can-do-ers.” They might begin by (1) thinking about the effects of perpetual population growth upon their respective areas of responsibility, (2) talking about the effects of perpetual population growth with others across the country with similar responsibilities, and (3) stating openly in appropriate documents that perpetually growing populations throughout the U.S. create perpetually growing problems for cities, counties, and states, as well as for the U.S. as a whole.

I think you can-do, Dave!

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Combined City Councils Ponder Public Safety in Lamorinda

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Running data obtained from high resolution cameras through ALPR devices, some Lafayette businesses can now “actually go through and record license plates themselves for vehicles that come up to their business or go by their business out on the roadway.”

Finally, said Christensen, are the “neighborhood camera systems which create that third layer of security, which are what you’ve heard about – the motion-activated cameras or the Reconyx cameras themselves. Every month we report to our Crime Prevention Commission about the use of the cameras, about the data we’re using, about problems we’ve seen, about crimes that we’ve solved with it.”

After early testing, said Christensen, it was easier to identify areas where crimes were occurring. In February 2014, they bought enough cameras to go through and surround those specific neighborhoods. “No one could get into and out of that neighborhood without us knowing,” he said.

“It seems to be enormously effective,” said Moraga Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf, who asked about the expense. Christensen estimated that Lafayette has used roughly \$70,000 for one portable and three mounted ALPR systems and \$30,000 for the 40 Reconyx cameras scattered throughout Lafayette, plus the student worker who maintains those. In response to Orinda Vice Mayor Victoria Smith’s query about cameras as deterrents, Christensen said he believes arrestees tell each other about the crime photos they’re seeing in Lafayette’s booking area.

But some residents are concerned about Lamorinda’s growing camera use. “Any information captured by Orinda ALPR readers, if we were to get them, would be shared, according to our police chief, with NCRIC – the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center,” said Jack Paulus. “They then share this data with 15 surrounding counties who have a

great many municipalities that have no privacy policies at all regarding this data.

“And the technology is prone to error,” he said. “Because images are not always clear of obstructions – like fences and poles which appear like the number 1 in the scans. And false positives have led to innocent people being dragged out of their cars at gun point, such as Denise Green in San Francisco, which led to a huge lawsuit there – and to our own Ninth Circuit Court ruling that ALPR hits are insufficient evidence to even pull someone over.”

When asked by Karl Richtenberg how many innocent people had been pulled over and whether there had been any false arrests or any kind of physical inconvenience suffered by citizens due to the ALPRs, Christensen answered obliquely. He explained that when the inside-car ALPR activates, the police officer receives an auditory alert with a picture of a vehicle that the machine just scanned. “In our department in the sheriff’s office, that doesn’t create probable cause to stop the vehicle – and our policy’s very clear about that. And so what the officer then has to do is go through and then to take and run the license plate itself, do a registration check, have dispatch come back and tell them that there is a reason to stop the vehicle.” On redirect by Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer, Christensen added that ALPR devices are mounted only on city parking enforcement vehicles, which are not allowed to stop cars or detain people.

Council members took no action since the Tri-Cities meeting was scheduled for informational purposes only. The Orinda City Council is tentatively scheduled to review the crime cam matter again at its first meeting in March.

The reports and meeting recordings are available on the City of Orinda’s website: www.city-oforinda.org.

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