Council Tables Rent Increase Moratorium

By Cathy Tyson

acing not enough votes to pass moratorium, and concerned with far," said Council Member Mike possible unintended consequences Anderson. It appears to have along with the administrative night- brought Sack Properties to the barmare of enacting a moratorium, the Lafayette City Council decided to continue working with controversial complex owner Sack Properties to encourage them to adjust skyrocketing rent increases at their recently purchased and newly named "1038 on Second Avenue" property.

Initially, an outpouring of tenants pleaded with council members to intercede and do something about rental rates that were going up 60 percent and more, seemingly overnight, mainly at this property, but also at other complexes in the city. Local landlords came forward to point out the flaws of a moratorium, many expressing that it unfairly penalizes those who have kept rates below market.

with Mark Mitchell recusing himself renovated and be offered at current from the matter, it would take four market rates. out of four votes to pass an emerwasn't going to happen. Council Member Traci Reilly explained that the council has been working with Sack Properties in good faith and "they are doing what we asked them to do" to lessen the burden on tenants, and they "have agreed to rescind those (rent increases)."

At the last city council meeting, the city attorney was directed to draft an emergency ordinance that would have stabilized rents for the short term as a precursor to a possible long-term rent control ordinance mously. that would have affected only the largest complexes in the city of with Sack Properties management "I don't recommend Lafayette. adopting the ordinance," said City lic comment period, one resident of Manager Steven Falk, "but want to 1038 on Second urged the council to keep it, if needed."

"The ordinance is our best haman emergency rent increase mer that seems to be working so gaining table, giving the city some leverage over a private business. He proposed keeping the ordinance around, but to table it for now so that it's available for use, if needed.

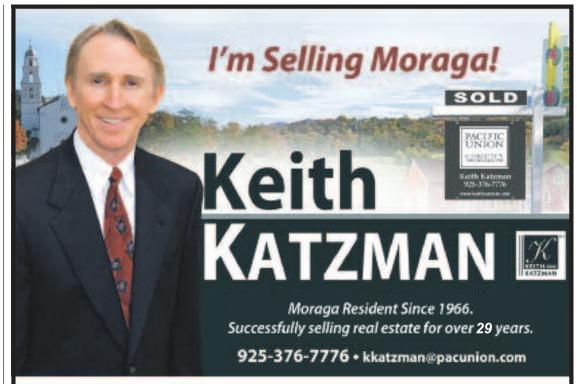
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Some council members met with a representative from the California Apartment Association to discuss standard practices, and discussed "modulated rent control" - a maximum cap of a 10 percent rent increase for current tenants who sign leases for a 12 month period, with a higher percentage increase for shorter month-to-month leases.

According to council members, Sack Properties agreed to offer modulated rent control. Tenants with Section 8 vouchers will continue to be welcome. As apart-Of the five council members, ments turn over, the units can be

Voicing concerns of the admingency moratorium. It was clear that istrative fallout of a moratorium, Council Member Don Tatzin preferred to achieve the same goals through other means. He suggested writing letters to larger landlords asking them to specify their positions on rent and fee increases, and evictions to "provide a forum to tell us what's going on in practice." He was also concerned about shifting utility costs onto tenants, calling that a rent increase, which will be addressed at future meetings with Sack. The council agreed unani-

> Meetings are slated to continue about the situation. During the pub-"not trust landlord promises."



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Branagh Gets an Okay on **Option**

By Cathy Tyson

city council to purchase a one year and out of the parcel from always option to develop the housing portion busy Moraga Road. of the city-owned 949 Moraga Road property.

A doctor's office on the property was recently bulldozed to make way, temporarily, for more parking as the proposal for a combination of workthe site is fine-tuned.

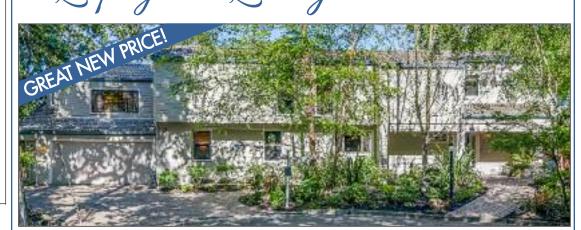
The City of Lafayette purchased the property back in 2010 with money from the Parking Fund. An independent task force analyzed a number of proposals for that site, coming up with suggested uses such as parking, afthe two or a hotel/private development. Branagh had previously been granted a 90-day non-exclusive winthe site. Study sessions with prelimi-

nary drawings were well received, but received an approval from the the problem area is clearly getting into

Branagh has been looking for a way to fulfill the required affordable housing component of a newly proposed residential condominium project known as Woodbury II on a parcel behind the Woodbury, across town at force housing and public parking on the 949 Moraga Road location. The housing would be mostly studios and one-bedroom units. The developer will pay for the option of purchasing the housing portion of the parcel for one year or until Woodbury II is acted upon, whichever is sooner. Woodbury II is still in its early stages and fordable housing, a combination of has not been officially acted upon, according to Niroop Srivatsa, planning and building director. The price of the option is being negotiated at this time, dow to explore potential concepts of but the Lafayette City Council approved of the idea.



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