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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

In her August 12, 2015, letter to the editor, Kathi Torres demonstrates a lack of knowledge about how our City of Lafayette works. Yes, city manager Steven Falk does ponder solutions to issues that may or may not impact the citizens of Lafayette. That is part of his job. Our elected and voluntary City Council members decide the path that we take to solutions. Mr. Falk implements that path. His comments to downtown problems may be troubling to some, but they are on point and anything but insulting.

The will of our citizens is and has been articulated in our General Plan (G. P.). One of the guiding principles that is listed in its introduction is to "encourage the involvement of citizen volunteers in land use and policy planning." I remind Ms. Torres that our current G. P. was developed by and for Lafayette citizens with work lasting more than a decade. This, our second plan, was built on the original G. P. that required nearly half a decade of citizen work that began after incorporation in 1968. Hundreds of volunteers have worked on and contributed to our plans over the many years. These individuals include City Council members, City commissioners, City committee members, members of the Chamber of Commerce, homeowners' groups, sports organizations, school board members, LPIE (formerly LASF) and countless individual citizens. Of course, the Bruzzone family made sure that individual property owner rights were/are preserved in our G. P. Our G.P. is certified by the state as conforming to its regulations. Development over the last several years adheres to the current General Plan. In short, Mr. Falk did not create the plan that we follow today; we, the collective and interested citizens of Lafayette, did that job.

When I moved to Lafayette, there were seven grammar schools and two middle schools. Now the count is four and one respectively. Mr. Falk, even with his two children, did not strain our public schools. I feel that Lafayette is a very desirable and attractive city in which to live, work, and play, thanks to its citizens, leaders, and organizations. I can't think of any other place I'd like to live, and approximately 23, 993 people seem to agree with me.

Erling L. Horn
Lafayette

Knock, knock.
Who's there?
Lafayette.
Lafayette who?

Lafayette, the city that ignores EPA Air Quality issues even though their city is built on a freeway.

Oh, that Lafayette! HA! The joke is on them!

For better or worse, Lafayette is built on a freeway, but the City of Lafayette refuses to enforce EPA Air Quality guidelines. The most recent development, the Homes at Deer Hill, is about to be approved even though the residents are being exposed to four times the cancer risk limit established by the EPA because the homes sit right on the freeway. Lafayette's answer? Tell the residents to keep their windows closed, stay indoors, and ask them to change their special air filters every three months. But since these are homes, there is no way to enforce that these very important filters are being changed. Lafayette's reasoning? It's OK since we just approved another building complex that's even closer to the freeway, and we didn't enforce the air quality guidelines in that one either.

Sadly, it's true. The joke is on us.

Susan Candell
Lafayette

Editor:

I was so glad to read in the 8-12-15 issue, a bike rider has complained about the way the lanes for cars and bikes have been designed as they go along Camino Pablo north, under Highway 24. The design of those stripes directing cars and bikes are an accident waiting to happen. I called public works to complain when I first saw them. The man I spoke could only respond from an entanglement of his assumptions. He only defended a biker's right to share the road. He could not hear my concern for a person's life. Safety and life are the primary points! I am driving a car and under no circumstances do I want to injure or kill a person on a bike. As a driver I have to be able to see him/her. And the bike person should not have to worry about being in the middle of cars, like a cowboy in the middle of a buffalo stampede! Second point: People and bikes deal with Moraga Avenue all the way to the town of Moraga. Why is it worse to have bikes cross safely over the freeway on the bike/pedestrian pathway? Each is safer there. And safety is the major concern! Life is more important than anything else.

Thank you.

Mary Anne Anderson
Orinda

Editor:

The Orinda City Council is about to begin a discussion of a downtown plan. One of the most useful and cost effective tools it should consider is a Technical Assistance Panel provided by the Urban Land Institute. This would be an appropriate initial step in identifying issues and future development options. The panel would work within a framework established by the City Manager and Planning Director, under the guidance of the Council and Planning Commission. Orinda's Municipal Code provides guidelines for the future development of the City's downtown. The following sub-paragraphs of section 17.8.1 "Intent" are particularly relevant:

"D: Regulate development so as to achieve a vibrant community center over time. All development...shall be consistent with this goal."

"E: Establish incentives, such as additional building height, higher floor area or broader range of permitted uses to help achieve a vibrant community center."

"K: Provide for multifamily housing, including affordable housing, in downtown areas, consistent with the housing element of the general plan."

The panelists would seek input from city officials and the primary stakeholders in downtown. Citizen groups concerned about downtown development, both pro and con, would also have their say. Panel members would be expected to recommend how Orinda can achieve a "vibrant community center" while at the same time preserving and enhancing the "village character" of its downtown. Given the wide array of talent within the ULI's Bay Area membership, it is reasonable to expect the volunteer panelists would address many facets of the challenges faced by the city. They could assess the current health of local retail and office markets, examine current zoning policy related to downtown development, and identify potential renewal opportunities. They can also assess potential fiscal benefits to the City that might reasonably be expected to occur from future development. AULI Technical Assistance Panel is an opportunity for the City of Orinda to gather some very useful input from experienced, professional members of a highly respected organization. Their multi-disciplinary expertise and cost-effective approach cannot be found elsewhere.

Michael Kaplan
Orinda

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