

# Letters to the Editor

## Celebrating Christmas in Moraga

I have some thoughts about the celebration of Christmas in Moraga. I note that we have a very large lot selling trees that are called, and advertised, as Christmas Trees. That some retail establishments make mention of Christmas as they try to capitalize on the tradition of people giving Christmas gifts and hope that those people will make purchases in their stores to use as their gifts. The town also has an opportunity for children to meet "Santa Claus" and have their pictures taken with him.

I find it odd that the town sponsors this, ignoring that Santa Claus is based on the real, historical man named Nicholas – a Saint in the Catholic Church – and his life story is the background of Santa Claus bringing gifts. That fact seems to have escaped the town fathers as they don't object to that – yet they persist in having a town "Holiday" Tree.

We have a big celebration for the lighting ceremony and yet we refuse to call it what it is, a Christmas Tree. Yes, the holiday of Christmas is a Christian holiday, based on the birth of Jesus Christ. Without that, there is no Christmas – and that is what Moraga is doing. Wanting to have it both ways – the celebration, yet remain politically-correct and try to eliminate the religious aspect of the day.

As a Roman Catholic, I want to officially register my view that what Moraga is doing is offensive to me and my religion. I am offended and I request that Moraga change the policy and get back to reality and have the town celebrate Christmas, as it was historically, should be now, and will continue – call it

'Christmas.'

If the town refuses to face this reality and finds it acceptable to continue to offend me, then I suggest there should be no mention of the holiday whatsoever. And by the way, this also goes to how Moraga ignores the reason for Easter. It is not about rabbits and eggs – it is a Christian religious holiday, regardless of the politically correct games the town continues to play. At the very least, call it what it is – Easter – which Moraga conveniently ignores.

Bottom line, I am offended and request a change in policy. Thank you.

Barbara Simpson  
Moraga

### Are trees an issue of safety?

Efforts continue to save community trees from unjustified removal per PG&E's tree removal agreement with the City of Lafayette. As a concerned resident, I asked the CPUC to scrutinize PG&E's pipeline management practices since PG&E failed to identify the glaring hazard of an exposed pipeline segment off the Lafayette Moraga trail before they deemed trees a danger. The Safety Enforcement Division of the CPUC is now investigating pipeline safety concerns in Lafayette.

If PG&E is destroying trees to comply with safety laws, they have yet to produce that proof. The City of Palo Alto and County of Santa Cruz declined tree removal agreements with PG&E, siding with residents to protect their environment. Some private residents refuse agreements with PG&E, while others take the initial offer of a 15-gallon "replacement" tree or negotiate more generous agreements

for tree removal and landscaping. There is no rhyme, reason, nor fairness to this "safety" program.

Meanwhile, City leaders credit their discretionary agreement for keeping PG&E "at the table", stating it holds PG&E accountable to city permit processes. Yet, the City waived some tree ordinances to make the agreement and applied others ensuring receipt of a whopping \$530K for tree removal. We believe our lawsuit, not the agreement, keeps the City and PG&E accountable to public interest, otherwise, trees would've been destroyed this past summer.

The City owns only 18 trees of the 272 trees slated for removal. Residents, who collectively own over 1/3 of the targeted trees, were not consulted before the City signed the agreement waiving protections for their private property. The City could regain credibility on this matter and rescind the agreement. In the least, until the fate of the trees is fully determined, the City should give PG&E back the \$475K tree removal money parked in a "landscaped median island fund", so residents know municipal project funding is not an issue here.

It has been a pleasure getting to know others in the community through this endeavor. Lafayette is truly a special place. Cheers to all in the New Year.

Gina Dawson  
Lafayette

### Orinda does not need a Downtown Specific Plan

I disagree with Tom Trowbridge and Kirsten Larsen, who wrote on behalf of OrindaVision and What's Up Downtown Orinda, that the passage of Senate Bill 35 means that Orinda should

create a Downtown Specific Plan because otherwise the state or developers will do it for us.

This kind of scare argument is based on a misunderstanding of SB 35. In fact, SB 35 does not require Orinda to make any zoning changes. SB 35 does not allow the state or developers to change our zoning. All that SB 35 does is to speed the approval process for projects that comply with existing zoning.

Existing zoning includes the height and density limits that most of us cherish. A Downtown Specific Plan would be a Trojan Horse that would ultimately undo those vital limits. Supporters of a Downtown Specific Plan want to raise the height limit and increase density. Don't be fooled or misled into supporting a Downtown Specific Plan.

Nick Waranoff  
Orinda

### Deer Hill Road

Hi,  
My name is Chase and I am an 11 year old who lives near Acalanes. I wanted to voice my opinion on adding homes on Deer Hill Road. I ride my bike and feel like there is so much traffic already on Deer Hill and Pleasant Hill Road. I can't imagine what it will be like when the new homes are built. I am writing because I don't think we should build homes there. My Mom and Dad also drive Pleasant Hill Road every day and it sometimes takes them 15 minutes to get from the freeway exit to Reliez Valley Road, I can't imagine what it will be like with the homes. I am really against the homes at Deer Hill.

Chase R  
Lafayette

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# Happy New Year

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What a wonderful year! In 2018 we will be celebrating our 50 year anniversary.

A BIG thank you to our loyal customers and the entire Diablo Foods Family!

Love, the Stokes and Collier Family