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City adds 20 acres for neighborhood hillside trails, open space



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By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette, in partnership with John Muir Land Trust, has added 20 acres of open space to its inventory of natural parkland with the purchase at the end of last month of

the “Batwing” property – the rambling hillside property located at 3333 Hamlin Road, so-called because its shape when mapped out resembles a flying bat.

The property sits between St. Mary’s Road

and Sweet Drive, roughly halfway between Stanley Middle School and Buckeye Fields. Once offered for sale for residential development, the property is now guaranteed to remain a permanent nature park with walking

trails open to everyone.

With the unanimous decision at the Jan. 28 city council meeting, the city is now halfway to meeting its General Plan goal of five acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Prior to the acquisition of this land the city needed to add 44 acres to the current 91 acres. The city’s plan had identified this property as a priority dating back to the 1980s.

Parks, Trails and Recreation Director Jonathan Katayanagi credited the hard work of the many volunteers who made this possible, including Linus Eukel, executive director of John Muir Land Trust, past and present city councils, and the Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission.

Funding for the \$1.8 million price tag will come from the Parkland Acquisition Fund, fees

that are collected when new development occurs, and from the city’s remaining Measure WW local grant funds. This sum includes money for signage, installation of some stairs, trail development, some fencing and initial costs for maintenance.

“A healthy park system offers diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation,” commented Eukel, explaining that this acquisition is part of a comprehensive strategy for the entire region. “In Lamorinda, John Muir Land Trust has protected 604-acre Carr Ranch, a pristine addition to a large wilderness refuge. We’re raising funds to protect Painted Rock, the potential anchor of a centrally located 505-acre community park that would be enjoyed by hundreds of visitors

daily. The 20-acre Batwing property is a wonderful example of a neighborhood park that gives people everyday access to the outdoors just steps from their homes.”

Mayor Cam Burks described the actions as representing for him one of the most historic city council decisions in decades. “Generations of Lafayette residents and others will be able to enjoy this pristine, nature parkland for many years to come; an area that truly represents the special character of our community. I want to express my profound thanks to Jonathan for his leadership, and the entire Parks, Trails and Recreation Department; in addition to our PTR commission and many other members of the staff involved in this undertaking.”



Photo Pippa Fisher

Acalanes High School Director of Choral Activities Bruce Lengacher (far right, with students and council members) led a harmonious performance by the Chamber Singers before the Feb. 11 city council meeting.

City hires recruitment firm, will seek public engagement on new city manager hire

By Pippa Fisher

The Lafayette City Council signed an agreement at its Feb. 11 meeting with the recruitment consulting company Avery & Associates, as a first step to finding a replacement city manager. The search is likely to take around four and a half months.

An ad hoc committee of Vice Mayor Mike Anderson and Council Member Teresa Gerringer worked with City Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson to review proposals from four firms.

With an emphasis on the need for public engagement and transparency Gerringer said that, although all firms allowed for convening community forums, conducting online surveys and meeting with key community stakeholders as a way to solicit input from the community, only one firm, Avery & Associates, included such measures in its initial fee – a total cost of \$26,900.

Paul Kimura of Avery & Associates explained to the council that he was aware of the value and premium being placed on community engagement and transparency. He explained that he anticipated meeting with each of the council members and reaching out to the community by phone, community Town Hall meetings and online surveys to seek input.

Once public input has been gathered, a search done and preliminary interviews completed, Kimura anticipates bringing roughly five to seven candidates to the city for its consideration.

Members of the city council, city staff, the interim city manager and the former city manager will conduct interviews, which will likely be done in private. Kimura noted the importance of candidate confidentiality and explained that he has seen qualified candidates withdraw rather than risk their name becoming public during the process.

Mayor Cam Burks has confidence in the selection of Avery & Associates.

“I’m very pleased with the firm we selected and thank Vice Mayor Anderson and Council Member Gerringer for their hard work in selecting a company with a strong track record,” said Burks after the meeting.

Burks explained, “What excites me most about our selection is that I believe we have chosen a firm that will utilize the right tools, process and methodology required to collect comprehensive public input; input from our community that is absolutely critical as we form the basis of the position description and select a city manager that will meet the identified needs of the people of our city.”

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Lafayette Public Meetings
 Tuesday, March 4, 7 p.m.
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

City Council
 Monday, Feb. 25, 7 p.m.
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission
 Tuesday, March 4, 7 p.m.
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review
 Monday, Feb. 25, 7 p.m.
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Arts & Science Discovery Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings
Acalanes Union High School District
 Wednesday, March 6, 7 p.m.
 AUHSD Board Room
 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District
 Wednesday, March 13, 7 p.m.
 Regular Board Meeting
 District Office Board Room
 3477 School St., Lafayette
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us