

# Slow Down Lamorinda

By Steve Angelides and Lee Borrowman

In the aftermath of three speed-related deaths in Lamorinda in recent months, the Mayors, City Managers, and Police Chiefs of the three Lamorinda communities met over lunch on Friday April 13th and decided they had to do something. So they came up with a campaign to crack down on speeders in Lamorinda, which they are calling “**Slow Down Lamorinda.**”

For each of the next 12 weeks, in each of the Lamorinda communities, police officers from the three jurisdictions, assisted at times by California Highway Patrol officers, will target certain streets for zero-tolerance speed enforcement. The locations of the crack-down will be well publicized in advance each week through the media, schools, and community organizations to draw attention to the goal of the campaign—to get Lamorinda drivers to slow down.

When Moraga Mayor Metcalf reported on the campaign to the Moraga Town Council last week, he said the enforcement would be “saturation, with lots of cops.” He explained that officers from all of the jurisdictions would be working together at the same location, and that any of them could issue tickets to violators.

Traffic enforcement campaigns may not be inherently popu-

lar, but Moraga Police Chief Mark Ruppenthal drew a round of applause when he unveiled the campaign to the Chamber of Commerce of Moraga last week, and Lamorinda officials held a public kickoff of the campaign at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Road, which has been dubbed the worst intersection in Lamorinda.

Since the recent deaths, residents in Lafayette and Moraga have been begging officials to take action.

Following the fatal accident near Acalanes High School in March, Lafayette residents came out for a “slow down” campaign during the morning rush. An advisory committee composed of local residents and city officials was formed to develop a plan to reduce speeds along that corridor. When new Police Chief Mike Hubbard helped present the plan at a meeting on April 11, he told a large crowd that addressing the speeding problem required a three-prong approach: “Education, enforcement and engineering.”

Last year Lafayette residents narrowly failed to pass ballot Measure P, a parcel tax which would have provided additional police funding. According to City Manager Steve Falk, speaking at a meeting several weeks ago, the city

conducted an informal exit poll which indicated that the number one reason voters did not support the measure was because “they did not want to get more tickets.” Since then Lafayette has taken a leading role in developing local traffic calming methods.

Last week Moraga residents packed what was supposed to be a procedural meeting of the Town’s newly-formed Traffic Safety Advisory Commission to demand action. Metcalf said the Town has responded to those demands by agreeing that it will put out mobile speed monitoring devices and park a police car, sometimes empty and sometimes staffed by a police officer, on Rheem Boulevard, where one of the recent deaths occurred.

The Healthy Choices Committees of Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte High Schools are currently actively engaged in establishing programs to specifically address issues surrounding teenage drivers. Promising among the possible plans is a program that employs peer pressure to encourage more responsible behaviors.

In addition to launching a campaign against speeding, the Lamorinda officials decided at their meeting on April 13th that

their second priority would be substance abuse. When Ruppenthal spoke to the Moraga Chamber last week, he noted that of the six items in the Moraga police blotter of the last issue of the Lamorinda Weekly, three were for driving under the influence and one was for possession of alcohol and marijuana by a juvenile.

However, so far officials have offered no details of what additional steps they plan to take to address the substance abuse issue. “We’ll see what happens during the 12 weeks (of the speeding campaign) and take it from there,” Ruppenthal said. The City of Lafayette already has an active drug-enforcement program, which has seen particular success in dealing with methamphetamine-related crimes.



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“Slow Down Lamorinda” is a Traffic enforcement campaign of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda.



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