

“Lock-down” Parties a Thing of the Past?

By Lee Borrowman

There’s been a new on-line petition circulating through Lafayette over the past couple of weeks which asks residents to support a proposed Social Host Liability Ordinance that was presented to the City Council on May 29 by Lafayette resident Joan Grimes.

Social Host Liability Ordinances are laws that hold private individuals responsible for underage drinking events held on their property. Orinda currently has a similar ordinance in place, and that city is currently considering some changes that would make their ordinance even stricter. The Lafayette City Council has not placed this proposed Ordinance on its agenda nor is this proposal currently under consideration by the Council. Should backers succeed in moving the proposal forward, it is expected that debate will arise around the issue of privacy rights in relation to restrictions on activities taking place on private property.

Grimes says, “Lafayette, as well as many other communities, has seen an alarming increase in the number of “home parties” or “lock down” parties. For example, after the Junior Prom this year, 911 had to be called due to alcohol poisoning. These parties are commonly large gatherings of young people in a private home. While California law currently prohibits both the furnishing of alcohol to underage persons and youth on public property, state law does not prohibit youth possession or consumption on private property.” Grimes would like the City of Lafayette to enact an ordinance “which would prohibit the hosting of private parties or gatherings where alcohol is consumed by minors.”

The meat of the proposed ordinance:

- A. No person may permit or host a party at his or her place of residence or other private property under his or her control where 2 or more unrelated persons under the age of 21 are present and alcoholic beverages are in the possession of, or are being consumed by any person under the age of 21 years of age.
- B. A violation of subsection A of this section is a misdemeanor, punishable by Community Service or Alcohol & Drug Education or fine of not more \$750 for the first offense, \$1,000 for the second offense and \$2,500 for the third offense, or by both such fine and Community Service/Alcohol Education Program.
- C. The amount of the fine under this section is a debt owed to the city by the Person Responsible. The city may bring an action for collection of the debt. The debt bears interest at the rate of ten percent a year. Interest accrues from the due date stated on the billing. To view the petition go to <http://www.gopetition.com/online/12467.html>



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