

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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Delivered bi-weekly to all Lamorinda households
Free

Volume 01; Issue 17

visit us online: www.lamorindaweekly.com

Wednesday, October 3, 2007



A joyful youngster takes off at a gallop to greet a friend emerging from a car that has just pulled into the nearby parking lot. The pair tussle and race around the park for an hour or so, frequently distracted by the arrival of a new playmate or the opportunity to play a little ball. People from all over Lamorinda mingle and chat, some holding cups of coffee close to ward off the nip in the morning air. Shortly before 9:00am the call goes out, "Time to go!" The more obedient leave without complaint. Some, however, simply flop down on the ground and refuse to budge.

If you guessed kids or mules, you're getting warm.

If you're a dog owner, chances are you know where and by whom this scene is played out, in infinite variation, nearly every reasonably dry morning and evening of the year. Rancho Laguna Park in Moraga is the place for your pooch to see and be seen by dozens of the playfully inclined.

David is at the park this morning with his 9-month old soccer-playing Fox Terrier, Bella.

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A Dog's Life

By Lee Borrowman

Lafayette Residents Help Define Vision For Downtown At Workshop

By Cathy Tyson

About 100 people gathered for the first Community Workshop as part of the Strategy for Downtown Lafayette at the Community Center last week. The purpose of the Strategy is to guide Lafayette so that it remains true to its past and still progresses forward.

Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) the consultant firm selected for the task has sent out surveys to all residents and businesses in Lafayette.

This is a many-phased project, anticipated to take about 18 months to complete, funded by Lafayette Redevelopment Agency funds. By California state law these redevelopment funds cannot be used for road repair, schools or police services. Right now WRT is working on Phase I - define issues and visions. To that end there have already been three meetings of the Citizen's Advisory Committee and WRT will continue to meet with them as they move forward.

Jim Stickley, Principal in Charge and Team Leader for WRT addressed and guided the workshop. First WRT looked at existing factors and analyzed them. Understanding physical land use like parcel size and ownership patterns, natural factors and open space and how they contribute to downtown's character, like building setbacks, parking locations, ground floor transparency and landscape character.

As an example of looking at what's already in town, he received an audience chuckle with "Lafayette has the nicest Jiffy Lube in the country." Continuing, "what cues can we take from existing automotive uses?"

A transportation specialist explained the firm took traffic counts and looked at parking patterns on a Friday afternoon. They differentiated between morning, late afternoon and mid-afternoon peak congestion times.

Another presenter spoke about the city's demographic profile, in a nutshell, "Lafayette is affluent, family-oriented with an older more highly educated population." WRT will look at downtown multi-family housing, residential development opportunities and especially mixed-use development.

Workshop members were asked to consider three questions, first, as the downtown continues to mature what type of uses should be incorporated. Second, are there key street segments or zones that need a different land use, and third, will tomorrow's downtown be able to serve the needs of future downtown residents?

Attendees were asked to brainstorm goals for downtown improvement, prioritize their top three goals, and indicate where actions should occur to achieve these prioritized goals. Every large cir-

cular table had a huge map and a collection of colored markers to note suggestions. A WRT facilitator helped each group stay on topic and encouraged considering what to do with the east and west ends of town.

At the end of the evening, table representatives came to the podium to summarize their top three findings.

One table suggested increasing mixed-use development downtown, increasing public gathering spaces, specifically turning La Fiesta Square into a pedestrian piazza and finally enhancing creeks and pedestrian walking trails, making them safer.

Tablemate Ruth Sechler, a 34-year resident of Burton Valley noted, "Lafayette is a wonderful place to live with terrific citizens who care."

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Joe Garrity, Erling Horn and Bob Russell attend Lafayette Community Workshop Photo Cathy Tyson

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Brave New World of On-line School Registration

By Cathy Tyson



OIS Principal Michael Randall

For parents frustrated with waiting in lines, writing numerous checks and filling out countless forms for school registration, there is a better way, and you can find it throughout the schools of Moraga and at Orinda Intermediate School (OIS) as well as Del Rey Elementary. "Its better, faster, cheaper, more efficient, and more environmentally-friendly," says OIS Principal Michael Randall.

The initial idea came from Miramonte High School. Like Miramonte, OIS is using LogiForms for data entry and RevTrak to handle the financial aspects of

the process.

Going paperless is a significant change. OIS had a committee to help transition from paper weekly and monthly newsletters to email. "It seemed like a natural evolution to start to add the registration process," reflects Randall.

Imagine 900 students, each with a packet of 30 - 40 pieces of paper. Much of the paperwork was redundant, the same information on multiple forms. Now its much simpler, all the forms come up online, already pre-populated with family name, address, student number. Parents can fill out the forms, and pay for yearbooks, lunches, T-shirts and sports fees all from the comfort of their own homes on just one website.

"The Orinda community was ripe for this kind of revolution, almost all families have computers, many families are already familiar with on-line purchasing." He continues, "The changeover couldn't have been done without the assistance of parent volunteers. Without their help, there's no way they could have made the switch. The Dis-

trict gave tremendous support, guidance and advice as far as developing the tools and uploading their information."

Without question, the new system is much more secure. Secure Sockets Layer software provides security for the OIS system, encrypting information and using firewalls. The old way, although supervised by school personnel, had up to a hundred volunteer parents handling student and family information. Now individuals have their own user name and password. Only about half a dozen school employees have access to confidential information. So far they have had no breaches of security.

Managing the old way with a paper-based system was inconvenient. For example, consider the number of kids purchasing yearbooks; accounting for the checks, making deposits, it used to take two weeks to sort out. Now it's done in minutes, according to Randall.

Even for families without a computer, OIS makes available 20 of their laptops for parents to use the system at school.

The PTA's of all the Moraga Schools

make electronic registration happen. Rheem Elementary was first, then Camino Pablo, then Los Perales, and Joaquin Moraga started just this year.

Erin Bydalek, the PTA President of Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, said, "this system is so much faster. The reason we went online was primarily for our own database needs, especially for hot lunch." It saves countless volunteer hours when parents can input their child's lunch order, versus manually having volunteers key in each child's choices and keep track of the money.

Marcia Holbrook, the Financial Secretary of Camino Pablo (CP) Elementary School PTA says by going to a web-based registration they were able to free up countless volunteer hours so they could funnel that time and energy into the school auction, which in turn raised thousands of dollars for the school. At CP each of the 400 students had a 40-page packet; that works out to 16,000 pieces of paper each fall. "We are able to access our information easier and sooner, track changes and be more green," notes Holbrook.

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