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## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Loved the chicken story in the edition, Jan. 21, 2009. Of course, I loved it, having raised chickens for yummy eggs at my home on Blackhawk Rd., Lafayette since 1966.

As the story progressed, I had moments of glee, each time you mentioned a neighbor of mine, Jackie Mann, then Michelle Chan. Reading on, and learning a bit of chicken history in Lamorinda, I found another friend and sustainable advocate, Steve Richard.

Reaching the end of a fun and most useful article, I felt a little disappointed. When Steve was talking to you about Sustainable Lafayette, I fully expected mention of our web site, 'sustainablelafayette.net', and the story entitled, 'LIKE TO RAISE YOUR OWN CHICKENS AND HAVE FRESH EGGS IN THE MORNING ? Submitted by: John Kiefer, jhkiefer@comcast.net

One of my avocations is to educate & encourage families to construct and raise their very own chickens. To that end, I placed my chicken story on the web site to reach a broader audience, and invite them to visit my organic, sustainable, model operation. So, I felt a little disappointed that the article didn't take the next step to inform our citizenry of the chicken story on the web. Please check the web site and enjoy the chicken story. [www.sustainablelafayette.net](http://www.sustainablelafayette.net). Menu: Home, Resident Stories, Food, "Raise Chickens and Have Fresh Eggs in the Morning".

Thanks for your help, and for your excellent writing.

John Kiefer  
Lafayette

To the Editor:

At an alarming rate, trash-collection rates in Orinda, Moraga, and Lafayette are going up. The rate increases will begin on March 1, 2009.

There should be no rate increases during a time of high unemployment and economic stagnation. Between February 2008 and March 2009, Orinda's garbage rates will rise by a staggering 24.3 percent. It is highly unlikely that the income of the average household in Orinda has gone up 24.3 percent.

Currently, Lamorinda's garbage rates are set by a governmental body, the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority. In January 2009, the authority's board of directors voted unanimously to raise rates. Sitting on the board are members of the city councils of Lamorinda, Danville, and Walnut Creek. Also sitting on the board are Gayle Uilkema and Mary Piepho, both of whom are members of the Board of Supervisors of Contra Costa County.

Orinda City Council member, Victoria Smith, is a board member of the waste authority. She voted for the rate hike and has some explaining to do. In her 2008 re-election bid, she accepted campaign contributions from garbage-collection companies and from the Teamsters Union. Local garbage workers belong to the Teamsters Union.

It is outrageous that garbage rates can be raised without a vote of the people. Garbage rate hikes are the functional equivalents of tax increases. Curiously, local tax increases have to go before voters while garbage rates do not.

The time has come to eliminate government from trash collection.

Garbage collection should be privatized. Selecting a garbage company should be the same as picking a gardener. If a privately-selected garbage company raises rates too much, then the company can be fired.

Richard S. Colman  
Orinda  
Editor:

For six years now, I have been trying to get a simple adjustment of the lot line between my two parcels in Orinda, to make them each about the same size. Orinda's planning director and city attorney and the City in general have asked me to surrender one of the lots for a scenic easement, get permits for sewer and water for both properties, get surveys, get soils reports, get reports on story pole placement if someone might someday build, and to indemnify Orinda for any lawsuit

brought against Orinda by bogus complaint against the city for granting this simple internal lot line adjustment.

This is a case of Orinda's intentionally breaking state law. That law says that a city is forbidden from requiring more than zoning conformity before granting a simple lot line adjustment.

In September 2008, Superior Court Judge Barry Baskin issued an order against the City of Orinda, vacating a City Council Resolution and requiring the City to obey state law. *Vogt v. Orinda*, Superior Court Case No. 06-1494, tells the whole sorry story.

The judge found that the 6 giant volumes of administrative record, thousands of pages, "contains overwhelming evidence to support the Petitioner's contention" that Orinda had violated state law. Judge Baskin found that Orinda's legal counterarguments were "disingenuous at best," since Orinda had been repeatedly warned of the violation, and state law is crystal clear. This is shameful conduct by a city government in a town otherwise known for its public-spirited and educated citizens.

The Contra Costa Times recently did such an investigative report. It can be found online on that paper's site or by entering a search term "Edward Vogt and Contra Costa Times."

But rather than promptly granting the lot line adjustment (which had been approved 7-0 by the Planning Commission years ago), the city attorney and planning director now want me to start all over again and re-apply for a lot line adjustment. That's a fool's errand. The City Council has all it needs to make its decision. The City Council should review the judge's order and follow it immediately. The Council and its (private law firm) city attorney should end this 6-year outrage and pledge to obey the law in the future.

Edward Vogt  
Orinda

To the Editor:

I was offended by your description of Ayers as a "...respected education professor...". Respected by whom? One of the most radical education institutions in America? I can only bemoan the thousands of young education students whose minds have been poisoned by this anti-American close minded "professor". And then there is the lovely Mrs. Ayers, widely believed to have placed the bomb that killed a young San Francisco policeman and critically injuring another.

The Ayers are a threat to everything that is good about America. Their ideas have a 100% failure rate and have caused great pain and suffering and often death for many millions of people. It is a tragedy that Barack Obama did not have more sense than to seek them out and accept their friendship.

Please see them for who and what they are and keep them out of our community and out of the minds of our precious young people.

Thank you,

Jo Gregg  
Moraga

Dear Editor,

I almost laughed out loud when I saw the Ayers protestor (cover photo Feb 4 issue) carrying a sign which read, Terror is NOT a Catholic Value!

Really? Is this person so unaware of his own religion's history that he never heard of the Crusades, the rack, burning at the stake, or the Spanish Inquisition?

If he needs more modern examples, consider the maiming and murder of people engaged in legal, constitutionally protected activities at family planning clinics. How about those nuns who beat small children with the metal edge of rulers? Terrorism has been and is part of every religion.

According to the FBI file, Ayers detonated a bomb at the Pentagon, in the middle of the night, so no one would be hurt.

A computer was disabled for 3 days. Not commendable but, compare that to say, John McCain, who, at the same time period, flew his airplane over Viet Nam. Once in position, he rained bullets, bombs and napalm on the citizens below. We now know the Vietcong were safely underground in their bunkers and tunnels. I know, I know, McCain was just following orders.

If we as a nation intend to end terrorism, we need to lead by example.

Admitting our own terrorist acts, especially those perpetrated by leaders and religious groups, would be a good start.

Like a heartfelt confession, it promotes cleansing, forgiveness, and maybe the beginning of the end of terrorism.

Louise Benvenue  
Orinda

Dear Editor,

As the Lafayette City Council considers in the next week its Finance Task Force recommendations for budget cutting I hope that we can all agree that it is not wise to cut police and public works support that the City gives to put on major events. The Chamber of Commerce makes significant donations to beneficiaries through the Art and Wine Festival and especially significant funds are given to our local schools after the Reservoir Run. Beneficiaries from the Lafayette Arts and Wine Festival are, The Lafayette Arts and Sciences Foundation--\$8,500 was presented by check in December to their Board of Directors--, for a total of \$22,350 to LASF, Generations In Jazz, Town

Hall Theatre, Las Trampas, Futures Explored, Trust in Education, Sr Help Line, Senior Transportation, Youth Homes, Project Second Chance, Loaves & Fishes, Shelter, Inc., Lafayette Rotary, LMO Sunrise Rotary, Acalanes Football Team, College Park Cross Country Team, and Boy Scout Troup #219. Since the Chamber began hosting the Art and Wine Festival, the Chamber has been able to give over \$127,000 back to the community through their non-profit partners. The October Lafayette Reservoir Run, hosted by Oakland Athletic Club, the City of Lafayette and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, attracted a minimum of 2,000 runners, hikers, etc., resulting in an \$18,625 donation to Lafayette schools. The checks were sent to Springhill, Lafayette, Happy Valley, Burton Valley and Stanley Middle School PTAs. They have many uses for that money. These events could not take place without the many sponsors and volunteers that help to cover the cost of the events and provide assistance at those events. Key amongst the assistance are the Lafayette Police Department and Dept. of Public Works to ensure public safety. We are all proud of our community and commend all of the groups who assist the Chamber of Commerce, the business community, and the City in putting them on safely. Please support the Lafayette PD and the City's Dept. of Public Works in their contributions to these excellent functions.

Lynn Hiden  
Lafayette

Editor:

In today's tough times, the City of Lafayette is looking everywhere for new revenue sources. The City Council seems to focus on our wallets rather than cutting budgets or expenses. Unable to get voter approval for new taxes in 1998, 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2008, innovative approaches are required to shake the quarters from our pockets. As the CC Times reported, the Council has found one: our creative Council will charge Waste Management a road use "mitigation fee" (around \$380,000) which, by design, is directly passed on to residents - i.e. a tax. Residents' fees will increase by 9% -- more than twice Waste Management's average increase. Our total garbage fees now approach twice Walnut Creek's. After the Council tried to pass the landscape and lighting tax without a vote, residents were promised there would be no new stealth taxes. This garbage fee may be clever, but it's still a new tax without a vote or even cursory community input. We don't need more taxes, we need more fiscal responsibility. Several months ago, our Council voted to give its bloated staff a 7% pay increase -- during an economic maelstrom when everyone else is cutting back. Will Lafayetters notice? Do they notice when staff swells to 40+ now, nearly a 500% increase since our incorporation, while our population remains about level?

Lawrence M. Pines, Esq.  
Lafayette

Dear Editor

It was with real sadness I just learned from the owners, Fely and Bill Ong, that they have sold the restaurant that has been such a part of the life of our family and of many of our friends for the past fifteen years. We'll miss so many things - The times that Fely patiently walked around with the the newest Phillips grand child so the parents and grandparents could finish their dinner. Her mom's instincts were amazingly calming. The patience they had with the various dining requests as the we explored our way through their menu. Even adding a couple of them to it! Their always making you feel you were part of a family. We watched their four children become adults as they they saw us add grandchildren to our family. Here's wishing them all the best in whatever they decide to do next. I'm guessing that after the dedication they showed to their restaurant and customers they - after a hopefully real vacation - will be on to a new adventure, although maybe of a very different kind. Whatever it is - I - and Moraga - will miss them!

Maryly Phillips  
Moraga

ORINDA MEASURE B

Editor:

As a 31-year resident and proud Orinda teacher, I'm saddened by the misleading letters from Richard Colman and Clyde Vaughn that, through their clever use of exaggerations and misrepresentations, serve only to plant seeds of doubt. Mr. Colman's latest is of particular interest because he at once calls for no new taxes to support education, while at the same time suggesting that teachers should get paid \$100,000 a year. Interesting to ponder; but totally unrelated to the issue our schools face today. Measure B is needed, not because teachers should be paid more, but because the very quality of our academic programs is at risk. Measure B is about optimizing student learning through small class size, providing literacy and math support, and keeping programs such as foreign language, music, and physical education alive. As for Mr. Colman's call for accountability, I urge him to take a look at the many accountability measures our school districts have established. On every measure, Orinda performs at the very top - and, even in this rarified atmosphere, continues to make gains.

Measure B is a sound investment in the Orinda schools that have proven time and again that they are accountable and achieve results.

Gail Ronneberg  
Orinda

Dear Editor:

The Feb 4th edition had a letter concerning Measure B criticizing Clyde Vaughn opposing every measure aimed to better our community...etc. Essentially blaming Prop 13 for the lack of funds for the schools. It is not Prop 13 that is to blame but the allocation of funds. If all the signers of the letter care to help the schools, why don't they donate the difference to EOF between what they are paying in property taxes now with what they would have paid without the Prop 13 cap...probably 3 or 4 more times as much and it is a tax deductible contribution too! A \$500,000 dollar home purchased today (if you can find one in Orinda) would have a \$5000 property tax bill (disregard the additional costs of bonds, etc) but without Prop 13, it would probably have been \$15,000 or more.

Walt Bateman  
Moraga

Editor:

Orinda School Parcel Tax Should Be Rewritten Measure B Parcel Tax information documents are misleading. Measure B should be defeated and rewritten with full disclosure of tax specifics in the Voter Information Pamphlet. The Tax should have an ending date so the tax does not go on forever, and be fair for Orinda seniors.

I have spoken with seniors who mistakenly believe age alone exempts seniors from the proposed Orinda Schools Parcel tax. Unfortunately, the senior exemption requirements are so stringent approximately only 60 Orinda seniors will qualify.

To qualify for the exemption homeowners must have an income of less than \$43,050. The School District gets this figure by using the median income of homeowners from areas outside Orinda. It is only fair the School District use the higher median income of Orinda so more Orinda seniors would qualify for the exemption. Since Orinda homeowners will pay the tax, the School District should use the median income of Orinda.

The School District documents submitted for the Voter Information Pamphlet do not disclose the \$43,050 figure, and that the School District is using the median income of homeowners from areas outside Orinda.

The School District does not give voters full disclosure in the Voter Pamphlet. This tax goes on forever without an ending date, and is unfair to seniors.

Janet Maiorana  
Orinda

Dear Friends and fellow Orindians,

Orinda schools are in serious need of additional funds to maintain the outstanding school system that we have grown accustomed to for so many decades. Low class size and focus on literature and math have always been the primary focus of the Orinda schools and it is imperative that this service to Orinda children be perpetuated.

The loss of State Funds have prompted the need for Measure B that will replace a significant portion of these lost funds. The parcel tax of \$124 per parcel is a small price to pay to afford the special local schools that so many of us in Orinda have either directly or indirectly benefited from.

Please vote yes on Measure B and be proud that you have personally contributed to maintain the best public schools in California.

Sincerely,

Peter and Darlene Hattersley  
Orinda

Correction to Letter to the Editor regarding Orinda Measure B (issue date 02/04/09) from Sue Severson et al: The names of co-signers Penny and Ian Baird were included in error, as they did not give advance permission for their names to appear on the letter.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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