

LAMORINDA Community

Moraga Improves Accessibility for Disabled Residents, but Challenges Persist

... continued from page 3



(L-R): Moraga Town Engineer/Public Works Director Jill Mercurio, Anne Reed and Tim McInerney Photo Sophie Braccini

Reed is a Human Resources director who has strived to make sure that a disability would not stand in the way of the hiring of a qualified individual. When asked how many people in Moraga are considered disabled, she replied, "The question is not how many people are disabled, but rather how all of us make sure that those with disabilities can live a full life."

McInerney commutes daily to his Berkeley job in his electric wheelchair, using public transportation, including the increasingly shrinking bus system.

The ADAAC agreed to recommend that the Town improve two curb cuts at Moraga Way and

Moraga Road. "The work has not been completed yet because of the extra cost added by storm drains that have to be relocated in order for proper curb cuts to be put into place," explained Mercurio.

The total cost is higher than the current ADAAC budget. "I am budgeting a total of \$40,000 for the installation of the curb ramps at Moraga Way at Moraga Road/Canyon Road," said Mercurio, "the design is completed and I'm hoping to reduce the overall cost by bidding and constructing it with another project that has a similar storm drain/ADA curb ramp situation.

The project will be proposed

to Council as one of the capital projects they evaluate during the budget process."

The committee also addressed a letter it received from former Mayor Lynda Deschambault, who asked that they look into completing the sidewalk along the north side of Moraga Road, between Devin Drive and Ascot Drive. "With the installation of the stop lights at Ascot, the town has improved accessibility for the residents all the way to Rheem," Deschambault wrote, "completing the few missing feet of sidewalk along the road would make sense."

As Mercurio explained it, the construction of sidewalks is the re-

sponsibility of individual homeowners. Cities such as Concord have adopted ordinances that require residents to complete sidewalks in front of their properties if such walkways are present along more than 50% of the path. The committee unanimously agreed to both send a letter to the few property owners who have not built a sidewalk along that portion of Moraga Road and to ask the Town to study a sidewalk ordinance.

"Regarding installation of sidewalk on properties that are a gap in an existing sidewalk network, I have that on my list of things to go to Council in the future," confirmed Mercurio.



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Lamorinda's Religious Services

St. Giles Episcopal Church of Moraga
Worshipping at St. Mary's College Chapel. All are welcome at our services.
9 a.m. Sunday Service: Holy Communion - with St. Giles' Choir. Child care is available all year.
1928 St. Mary's Road, Moraga. 925-376-5770

Willow Spring Church
1675-1689 School Street, Moraga
www.willow.springchurch.org (925) 376-3550
Sunday Service Times: Prayer @ 8am, Traditional @ 9am, Contemporary @ 10:30am

Weekly Activities:
Wednesday Community Bible Study @ 10am
REVERB (youth) @ 7pm
Friday Night BLAST! Kids Club @ 6pm
Saturday Night Catalyst (Young Adults) @ 7:30pm

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
Church Services and Sunday School (up to age 20); 10 - 11 AM
Informal Testimony Meeting, Wed 7:30 - 8:30 PM
24 Orinda Way www.christianscienceorinda.org
Visit our Reading Room and spiritual bookstore across from the Orinda movie theater.

Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, 433 Moraga Way Orinda
8:15 a.m. Traditions Worship Service
9:15 a.m. Coffee Fellowship
9:40 a.m. Education for all ages
10:45 a.m. Celebrations Worship Service
Childcare available for ages 5 and younger
925-254-3422

Our Savior's Lutheran (ELCA)
1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette
283-3722 • www.oslc.net
Sunday mornings at OSLC:
Classic Worship, 8:15 am
Education Hour, 9:30-10:20 am
Contemporary Worship, 10:30 am

St. Anselm's Episcopal Church
A Loving Community
Sunday Services: 8 and 10 AM
Active Youth Program, Childcare
682 Michael Lane, Lafayette, 284-7420, www.stanselms.ws

Worship the Lord with us
Sundays at 9am & 10:45am
Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church
10 Moraga Valley Lane, Moraga • www.mvpctoday.org • (925) 376-4800

Letters to the Editor

Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writers and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and town (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only), and should be 350 words or less. Letters may be edited for length or legal considerations. email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: **Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570**

Dear Editor:

Re: Native Plants vs. Lawns

A gardener can easily conserve water, reduce energy-use, save money and still have a lovely garden. Native plants ugly? I love my manzanitas, ceonothus and wildflowers (dominated by easy California poppies), but EBMUD and the California Native Plant Society (go to their Native Here Nursery) can suggest a wealth of other choices (including summer bloomers like penstemons and fuchsias). Once you establish such a garden, you will discover it not only makes gardening easier, but also will provide the satisfaction of conserving and recycling resources without thinking.

Hiring a landscaper costs no more for a drought-tolerant garden than for any other style of gardening and saves you money in the long run - because your lawn uses more fertilizer, water and energy than any other area in your garden. A power mower is a gasoline guzzler and smog emitter -- and imagine your neighborhood with the sound of birds singing instead of high-decibel noise! If you plant for our Mediterranean climate, pests (and hence pesticides) and fertilizer will also be minimized.

But you don't have to hire anyone and you don't have to totally get rid of your lawn. You do need at least a basic plan, however, like: place large shrubs behind smaller plants, sun lovers together etc. You can begin by shrinking the edges of your lawn and frame the front yard with borders or shrubs for a pleasing effect.

Cinda MacKinnon (Environmental Scientist)
Orinda

P.S. More environmental facts: Fertilizers and pesticides require a large amount of energy to produce and transport - thus burn fossil fuels and add to global warming. Pesticides linger in the soil and end up in the creeks. EBMUD reports that the main contaminants of our Lamorinda creeks - which flow to two drinking water reservoirs - are from residential use of pesticides and fertilizers.

Editor:

When citizens of Lafayette decided to consider incorporating in 1968, full details were communicated to its residents, of what the town would be, functions its government would assume - and, by absence of what it wouldn't be responsible for, left all other desired activity to volunteers. Essentially, government would accommodate Public Safety, Planning and Public Works. Appropriate citizen "commissions" would be established to serve as unpaid supporting resources for paid city staff's functions. The key to all this was that voters authorized "what" our city was to be - and, "how" it would be

Public Forum JOIN IT

Editor's note:
In March of 2008, music teacher James Toland was charged with several counts of committing lewd acts with a minor. The charges were dropped after a preliminary hearing when Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge John Sugiyama ruled that evidence obtained under a search warrant was inadmissible. Charges were re-filed and Toland was back in court in November, 2008. Sugiyama dismissed the charges, stating that he found no evidence of lewd intent. The prosecutor moved to have a second judge review the complaint (as allowed under California Penal Code.) Superior Court Judge John Laetner reviewed the preliminary hearing transcript and, during a hearing in Martinez on March 12, reversed Sugiyama's ruling and reinstated nine of the original ten charges, sending the case back to Sugiyama's courtroom. Toland has pleaded not guilty to all charges. This case has been very controversial and has generated much concern among local parents and students with differing perspectives. The opinions expressed below are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

The following letter was mailed to the following members of the Town Hall Theatre Board on May 11th. It was signed by 32 members of the Lamorinda community. To date, the signers have received no response.

To the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board, Town Hall Theater Company of Lafayette: Dennis Erokian, Clyde Long, Sven Ryge, Bett Mickels Tokar, Richard Dent, III, Joe Faber, Amy Goodheart, Dave Pinkham, Lynn Carey Zampa, Ray Bland, Judy Carney, Ed Stokes, Ron Tarica, Jeff Witt

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are writing to bring to your attention a sensitive matter involving the theater and the Lamorinda community. The theater calendar published online indicates a rental for a "Choir Concert" at 7 PM on Sunday, June 14th. We want to make certain that you are aware of the purpose of this "Choir Concert" and the ramifications of allowing this event to take place at the Theater. This event is actually a fundraiser to solicit donations to pay the fees of private attorneys to defend James Toland, a vocal coach who has been charged with molesting three Campolindo high school boys during private lessons at his home and who is scheduled to appear in court on May 19th to set a date for trial on those charges. Attached to this letter is a copy of an email notice/invitation to supporters of Mr. Toland describing the details of the planned event which is hailed as a "wonderful way to cap a wonderful weekend" and as a "tribute" to Mr. Toland. Debating Mr. Toland's guilt or innocence is not the purpose of this letter. That is, and always has been, the purview of the court. What we wish to impress on you is how traumatic this process has been for the three boys and their families. No one who listened to their testimony in court could fail to have been moved by their sin-

governed. Only rarely have these benchmarks been violated. Now however, a critical "outsider intrusion" on our "2nd P" is in progress - i.e., a "Downtown Strategic Plan" conceived by a 500,000 consulting firm...in effect, is moving in on Lafayette's outstandingly capable Planning Commission's "turf." This letter doesn't expound full details of the "Draft Plan" - only to note - in several areas, it totally contradicts Lafayette's very essence...its "semi-rural physical setting," "urbanizing" high rise structures the length of downtown Mt. Diablo Blvd, downtown concentrations of "affordable housing" (here comes Section 8), downtown creek and park developments, a new through street between Mt. Diablo Blvd and Rt 24. In short, making us a small-scale Walnut Creek. Most troubling is the "cultural slant" of DSP - it reflects all the social spin of an earlier attempt by the County Supervisors, to impose its "Shaping Our Future" (SOF) version of the UN Agenda 21 "Smart Growth" concept. This, a scheme which would have given the BOS full control of land use in all 19 county jurisdictions. Fortunately, when citizens fully understood "transit villages", eliminating single family dwellings in core areas - and, other social engineering schemes, the \$750K venture was abandoned. But - only because the public got "wired in." And, so it should be re DSP - the public needs to be provided full details of "the how and who" of DSP's authorization, its "funding OK," why it would potentially displace a very recent update of Lafayette's General Plan (by a very capable Planning Commission). And, most critically important - failure to put to a 2/3s vote, any acceptance and/or implementation of a Plan, allowing city bureaucracy to radically alter Lafayette's "founding base."

Donald Lively
Lafayette

Dear Editor,

"Kudos to the Lafayette Juniors!" On Saturday the Juniors had their 10th Annual Lafayette Kitchen Tour. My cottage was one of the homes on the tour and I would like to express my thanks to this group of dedicated hard working women for a job well done. There was not a stone left unturned as they prepared my cottage and garden for the Kitchen Tour and luncheon in the back garden. They left me at ease when you think that 600 people will be walking through your home and when the tour was complete everything was immaculate both inside my cottage and the garden. If you are approached to have your home on the tour I would encourage you to get involved with this dedicated first class group of women. Thanks again to the Juniors for a job well done!

Jim Peacock
Lafayette

cerity and their obvious suffering. These boys did exactly what responsible adults teach their children to do when they feel they have been touched inappropriately. They took a great risk in talking about the alleged assaults and showed extreme courage in describing and demonstrating the precise nature of the touching in open court. These boys have faced open and thinly-veiled hostility from supporters of Mr. Toland in that courtroom, in their classrooms and in choir rehearsals and now they are going to be faced with this "benefit concert". Their own classmates will be performing, and their classmates' families will be there contributing money and time-shares to pay tribute to the man that is about to stand trial for molesting them. Surely you can understand why we believe it would be extremely inappropriate for your worthy organization to host such a divisive event. Your mission statement envisions a theater company "that serves the community in a socially and educationally responsible manner." Allowing this event to take place in the theater would be socially and educationally irresponsible. Clearly this "benefit concert" will only add to the trauma already suffered by the boys, their families, friends and other community members who love and support them. But what may be worse is the message that would be sent to young people in our community. Does a theater group that provides so many great programs for local youths really want to appear to be supporting someone charged with molesting young people in our community? We truly hope that you will reconsider your decision to rent the theater facility for this purpose. It is not in keeping with your mission or your valued role in the community. In view of your upcoming fundraising event, it seems particularly inappropriate to make the theater, which is largely supported by the Lafayette/Moraga community, available for such an emotionally charged event that has divided this community. We recognize that the supporters of Mr. Toland have every right to choose to donate to his legal defense. However, a community theater, designed to serve the community and be supported by the community, is not an appropriate venue for a fundraiser for someone about to stand trial for molesting members of that community. Trish Bare and Gordy Erspamer, Mike and Julie Wirth, Kelley L. Yanes, The Clemens Family, Jim and Dana Dawson, Lisa and Michael Monroe, Sabrina Majzoub, Jamie and Brad Ertola, Cindy and Will Cogswell, Cheryl and Joe Cushing, Jeff and Eldeen Shields, Patricia & Gary O'Neill, Gayle & Mike Leksan, Phil and Marybeth Henningsen, Shivaun Wraith, Leslie and Murray Kalish, Emily and Peter Markavage, Barbara and Rick Graziano, The Tringale Family, Moraga, Linda Wu.

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to letters@lamorindaweekly.com and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum.