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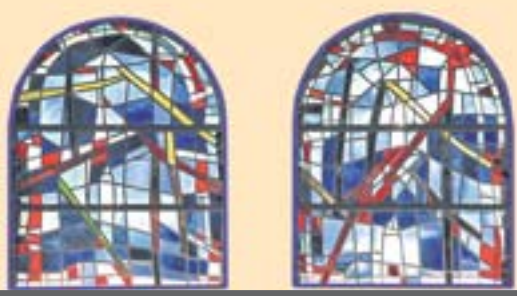
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Join our Public Forum
 If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public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


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.willowspringchurch.org
 (925) 376-3550
 Sunday Service Times:
 Prayer @ 8am, Traditional @ 9am, Contemporary @ 10:30am,
 Services for youth and children after worship during the 10:30am service

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH
 24 Orinda Way, Orinda (next to the Library) - 254-4212
 Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 - 11 am
 Informal Wednesday Meeting 7:30 - 8:30 pm
 Reading Room/Bookstore M-F: 11 am - 5 pm
 (across from the Orinda Theater)
www.christianscienceorinda.org

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
 925-254-3422 Childcare available for ages 5 and younger

Our Savior's Lutheran (ELCA)
 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette
 283-3722 • www.oslc.net
Sunday Morning Schedule:
 Classic Worship, 8:30 am
 Education Hour, 9:45 am
 Contemporary Worship, 10:45 am



THE ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH
 10 Irwin Way, Orinda, CA 925.254.4906
www.orindachurch.org
"No matter who you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!"
Join us Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Refuge Community Church YOU Are invited!
 A NEW, non-denominational Christian church
 opens in Lafayette - Sunday, March 14th
www.refugecommunity.org
 925-942-1000

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

Worship the Lord with us
 Sundays at 9 & 10:30am
Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church
 10 Moraga Valley Lane, Moraga • www.mvpc.today.org • (925) 376-4800

LAMORINDA Community
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.
email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:
 I am so saddened by the state of the Rheem Shopping Center. I don't even think it warrants the title "Shopping Center" anymore since there are so few places to shop! I don't know if you have ever done a story on this Kimco Realty group, but I would sure love to see one. I don't really keep up-to-date with council meetings, etc., but I'm also wondering what has been tried, etc. Is there any way to get these people out of here? They seem heck-bent on emptying every store.
 Someone once suggested to me that Kimco makes more money reporting a loss for the empty stores -- can this be true? They must only also allow the thrift store drop off and art gallery to operate because it must give them some sort of write-off as well.
 That whole stretch now from what was our wonderful ice cream store - to the tanning store -- Blockbuster, etc.etc.etc. It's just AWFUL. Is there ANYTHING we can do? I have lived in Moraga for about 8 1/2 years and have seen an incredible number of stores try and fail.
 My question is, is there any way to rid ourselves of Kimco? What is the Town doing about this? Anything?
 I'm sure I'm not the only resident who is curious. This can't be doing anything for our town's appearance, property values, etc. It's a disgrace.
 Thanks.
 Jari Hazard
 Moraga

To the Editor:
 I find the article regarding the newly installed Mayor of Moraga Ken Chew to be vastly inconsistent from his public behavior. Of particular note is Mr. Chew's goal that he wants constituents to provide feedback regarding the public policy process.
 In February 2009, I spoke at public comment regarding the impending contract of the current Town Manager Michael Segrest. The main point of my comments, based upon my experience while on the Moraga School Board, was that the public was specifically excluded for the selection process. As your readers are probably aware, I ran and lost for a seat on the Moraga Town Council (MTC) in November 2008. However, given my involvement in various public policy issues affecting Moraga, I was totally unaware of that interviews were being conducted for this position. This was, in spite, of numerous conversations I had with then-interim Town Manager Jay Tashiro during the summer and fall of 2008. Nonetheless, I felt compelled to voice my opposition to the selection of Mr. Segrest to this position based on his professional experience as well as municipal finance considerations. However, given the posture and comments of the members of the MTC which included Mr. Chew, it was clear to me that any dissenting opinion was the last thing that the MTC cared to listen to. It was very apparent that public comment, with respect to this public policy issue was a mere formality, or should I say, nuisance required by the Brown Act.
 I strongly suggest that the current members of the MTC, including Mr. Chew, seek out and include diverse viewpoints and opinions in our community. I think that they will find that there are many in our community who feel their

voices are being ignored, and perhaps even muffled by the cacophony of voices from the cadre of seemingly blindly loyal MTC supporters. I kinda remember that old children's tale about the emperor new clothes. The MTC, including Mr. Chew, would be well served to remember that tale when they listen to those same voices who praised the emperor for his wonderful, yet non-existent, wardrobe.
 Dennis Wanken
 Moraga

Dear Lamorinda Weekly:
 I love your paper and the great job that your organization does it keeping us connected in our small communities.
 I live in Moraga at the mid section of Ascot Drive over-looking the Rheem Park shopping center. It is quite a nice view and I often have all my windows open to view the hills, cows, turkeys and deer that frequent the area. Recently a family moved into the next building and they let their dog roam between the two buildings, go down the hill a bit and take care of business....However it is right where my back viewing deck is. Right away if windows are open you can smell it, my company can smell it, my neighbors can smell it and we retreat inside and close the windows. It is such a bummer. We have several pet owners here and they have never allowed this. They take their animals for well deserved walks and pick up the poop.
 What can I do to get the quality back from my view and opening up the windows and hopefully before the seasons change and it gets hot again?
 I have checked for ordinances and I can only find the off leash ordinances at the parks and some other places around the Lamorinda area, but is there anything I can do to ask the neighbors to not let "sparky" poop in the hill below my home?
 Thank you,
 Ginger Misuraca
 Moraga
(Editor's note: We investigated, hoping to answer this reader's question. Contra Costa County has an ordinance that requires dog-owners to pick up after their pets. Ordinance 416-12-204 can be viewed at <http://www.contracosta.ca.gov/index.aspx?NID=1211>. The cognizant office is Animal Services, 925-335-8300.)

Dear Editor,
 It is hard enough to see every one of our local school districts in the area announce their significant budget deficits for the coming school year, but to have it as a result of a Governor's proposed budget, where he has claimed that he has "protected" education seems very deceptive!
 In fact, according to the California State PTA, the Governor's budget proposal will reduce funding to schools over the next two years by \$2.4 billion. California's per student funding is among the very lowest in the nation. Our schools need our support, both in volunteer time, and financially. Our students are our future, we all need to do what we can to support our local schools, especially in these tough economic times.
 Sarah Butler
 Orinda

Public Forum

Moraga Orinda Fire District
 As we enter a new decade in 2010, it is appropriate to both look ahead at what is planned for your Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) – and to also look back at the progress that has occurred over its first 13 years.
 Many of us well remember the driving factors surrounding the District's formation. Specifically: (1) we wanted to significantly enhance the seriously deficient emergency medical services that existed at that time in much of Orinda; (2) we needed to replace almost all of the old Orinda Fire District's apparatus and to seismically retrofit its fire stations; (3) we wanted to ensure that the outstanding paramedic engine company, paramedic ambulance, and fire services which already existed in Moraga, Canyon, and the portion of Orinda that was formerly served by the old Moraga Fire District would be sustained and (4) we wanted to secure local control over our fire and emergency medical services, which at that time were controlled by the County.
 I personally remember a day in 1988 when our pediatrician in Orinda told my wife to quickly drive one of our children to the hospital, as it was critical our baby receive immediate emergency treatment. Today, that advice would be irrational – as the safest and most expedient method for such an emergency medical transport would be an MOFD paramedic ambulance. However, that was definitely not the case in Orinda before MOFD was formed.
 Since its formation 13 years ago, MOFD has increased its paramedic ambulance service from the one paramedic staffed ambulance that formerly served the old Moraga Fire District to three paramedic ambulances – two of which are based at stations in Orinda. Canyon now has an 11,000 gallon water tank to help provide precious water in the event of a fire in that area. MOFD's Orinda stations have received new fire engines, a new water tender (tanker) and new paramedic ambulances. The Moraga stations have also received new fire engines and new paramedic ambulances. Two new, seismically safe fire stations have been built – one in each of Moraga and Orinda. Along with a seismically retrofitted Orinda fire station, we can ensure that firefighters and emergency medical staff will be able to deploy equipment in the event of a major earthquake. Firefighter training – and particularly emergency medical services training – has also been significantly expanded and improved.
 Of course, improving the District over the past 13 years has not come without pain, learning, and admittedly, a few mistakes along the way. With what we learned last year regarding an arguably arcane system that allows for retirement pay to exceed base salary in one's last year of service, we have taken steps to structure the new chief's contract in a way which will limit retirement benefits to be more consistent with the intent of the program. We have also worked with the firefighters union to produce a new contract that has no salary increases and also enables the parties to re-open discussions if new pension or medical coverage issues emerge.

MOFD has not been immune to the financial challenges that have impacted public entities as a result of the severe economic recession these last two years. The fire district's 2009-2010 budget reflects a deficit. Fortunately, MOFD has diligently set aside a rainy-day reserve which will help us through this year's shortfall. Furthermore, the District has a solid long-range financial forecast which conservatively indicates that we will shortly be back in the black. Other issues we are addressing include increases in our annual pension contribution as a result of the County Pension Plan suffering investment losses and ever-rising health care costs.
So what's in store for MOFD in the coming year?
 We truly want to encourage more community involvement and we want to make sure that communication from MOFD to you is clear, concise, and current. To accomplish this, we will be implementing the following:
 First, we are in the process of introducing an improved website. Our website – MOFD.org – will make it easier for you to see when Board meetings are scheduled, what is on the agenda for upcoming meetings, and also the minutes that detail what occurred at past meetings. The website will also provide easy access to information that will help you to understand the District's ongoing operations. That information will include: budgets, financial statements, long-range financial forecasts, employment contracts that cover all of the District's staff, and our strategic plan.
 Second, we are looking at larger sites for the board's regular meetings that will facilitate greater public participation.
 Third, we are seeking to enhance community participation in the review of the district's financial plans. The following agenda items have been tentatively scheduled and can be confirmed at MOFD.org.
 • Strategic Plan review – February 3rd
 • Long Range Financial Forecast update – March 3rd
 • 2010-11 Budget review – April 7th
 Finally, we recognize that our community is blessed with well educated and forward-looking citizens. We encourage everyone with any and all good ideas for improving MOFD's service, efficiency, and effectiveness to come forward and share them with us. After all, a 13 year-old doesn't have all of the answers. We as a Board will continue to do our absolute best to ensure continued outstanding fire and emergency medical service. We value your help and input in assuring our success in that endeavor.
 Sincerely,
 Frank Sperling
 Moraga
(Frank Sperling is the President of the Board of Directors, Moraga-Orinda Fire District)