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Council Unanimously Approves Unique Open Space Deal

By Cathy Tyson



Photo by Photo Hutch for the Muir Heritage Land Trust

"It reflects the remarkable maturity, regional leadership and a commitment to community caretaking," said City Manager Steven Falk in a statement.

The Haji family was a willing seller, and with the help of MHLT Executive Director Linus Eukel, along with the Lafayette Open Space Committee and the City Council, it all came together.

"Sometimes achieving an acceptable outcome for a complicated project such as this can be elusive, as it was for years in this case," said Eukel. "The Land Trust is uniquely positioned and able to bring willing partners together to find solutions. This acquisition will benefit the wider community, even those who enjoy the profound beauty of the Acalanes Ridge as a faraway vista. By reaching out to create new partnerships, and by fulfilling its capacity as a land trust, MHLT helped provide the leadership needed to affect a solution that was unachievable for more than a decade."

The City of Lafayette has been interested in the parcel for many years. "The MHLT will own the property in fee and will transfer a conservation easement to Lafayette, Walnut Creek and the East Bay Regional Park District," said Falk.

City Council members unanimously approved the funding agreement. After giving thanks to the EBRPD and the City of Walnut Creek, Council Member Carl Anduri said, "This is what makes it worthwhile to be on the Council. We're very fortunate to have this happen."

There was a palpable feeling of enthusiasm at the March 8th City Council meeting. "Yes, please!" said Eliot Hudson. "Thank you to the MHLT, they have been absolutely phenomenal. I have a deep respect and gratitude for what they've done. It's truly a marvelous piece of property."

"The next step is fundraising," said Eukel. "The campaign's goal is to raise the \$427,600.00 needed to purchase Acalanes Ridge, provide funds to steward the acquired property in perpetuity and support the organization's work. So many people have worked so long to preserve the natural beauty of this land. We're expecting the same community support we've seen for so many years."

He continued, "This is the opportunity so many have hoped for-to at last protect this open space as a home for wildlife and a refuge for people from the stresses in our busy lives."

Donations to the Muir Heritage Land Trust to support the Acalanes Ridge purchase and the Keep It Wild Campaign can be made online at www.muirheritagelandtrust.org, or can be sent to: Muir Heritage Land Trust, P.O. Box 2452, Martinez, CA 94553. For more information, call the office at (925) 228-5460 or e-mail info@muirheritagelandtrust.org

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