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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I feel that the reporter's comments in the Police Reports are often offensive and always unprofessional.

Shirley Gregory

Moraga

Editor

Those of us in the Moraga's Lighting Assessment District have been paying only \$16 a year for street lights, an amount that hasn't covered the cost for a long time. We are being asked to pay \$58 a year, which is still less than five dollars a month. If this assessment --it isn't a tax -- had been gradually increased to \$58 over the years to keep up with the cost, we would still consider it a bargain, if we had noticed it at all.

The Town of Moraga's general fund has been making up the difference. This means that those without street lights have, in effect, been subsidizing those of us who have them. This isn't right. We should pay this light bill, just as we pay PG&E for our indoor lights. The Revenue Enhancement Committee brought this problem to our attention last year as it searched for ways to keep the Town of Moraga in business. Although the increased assessment wouldn't bring in new revenue, it would relieve the general fund of this burden, which would have the same effect.

Please return your ballot approving the higher assessment so that the Town Council can determine whether there will be sufficient revenues to continue operating the street lights next year.

Dale Walwark

Moraga

Dear Editor:

Using the New Math of the Moraga Town Council, \$300,000 equals nearly 400%. But first you must understand that principles of the Moraga Town Council's New Math. First principle, more is less. Spend more on town staff. For example, spend more for a town manager and director of public works than most comparably sized municipalities.

Then ask for homeowners is pay nearly a 400% increase in lighting fees. Second principle, buy more save more.

Then our esteem town council decided to go on a real estate spending spree when prices are low. Disregard the fact that the property is not needed and requires compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act at additional costs.

Third principle, lowest bidder is the best bidder while using Obama Stimulus Act funds. One only need look at the road paving debacle on Moraga Road to see this principle in action. The drawback of the third principle is now the Moraga Town Council will spend more of our money to litigate some semblance of professional services contract compliance.

Fourth principle, establish an advisory committee and give it some meaningless title like the "revenue enhancement advisory committee". The only problem with such a lofty sounding title of this advisory body is that it only looks at one component of the budget formulation process. We, the trusting public, come away with the belief that this is actually a "budget advisory committee".

I know its been quite some time since I took accounting in business school, but this version of accounting is something I've never had the opportunity to work with. Maybe I should try these principles with my wife. "Oh, honey let's buy the \$160,000 Mercedes-Benz. After all, the more we spend, the more we save with the 3% discount the dealer is giving us". I already tried this logic with her about the lighting assessment increase and it didn't fly too well.

Her logic, why should spend money on this lighting when she can go shopping. Sorry folks, her logic is hard to beat. So maybe I'll just have to vote against the Moraga lighting assessment and vote for Acalanes Measure A

Dennis Wanken

Moraga

Editor:

Over the past three years, the Acalanes Union High School District's revenue allowance from the State has been reduced by \$1,575 per student or \$8.6 million. To deal with the deep revenue reductions, the District has been forced to make difficult program and staff reductions to assure it can meet its financial obligations.

In spite of the financial challenges facing the Acalanes Union High School District, as a result of the state fiscal crisis, the District continues to receive superior credit ratings from Moody's and Standard & Poor's investor services.

Moody's and Standard & Poor's have recently affirmed the District's rating at Aa2 and AA, respectively.

Both ratings reflect the very strong credit worthiness of the District. Prior to assigning a score the rating agencies evaluate the local economy, existing district debt and finances, and administration/management strategies of the District. Based on these credit ratings, the recent issuance of bonds for sale resulted in the entire offering being purchased within one hour. This is reflective of fiscal confidence in the audits, policies, and procedures of AUHSD during a time of cautious investment.

The credit ratings for the District confirm the Governing Board's commitment for prudent financial planning in these difficult economic times. The ratings are a reflection of the District financial transparency and integrity.

Chris Learned,

Associate Superintendent -

Business Services

Acalanes Union High School District

Editor:

Thanks for your thoughtful response, Mr. Hasselman AIA (Public Forum- April 14, 2010) to my Public Forum of March 30. It's good to have some dialogue - finally --- between a group (Orinda Vision) and a resident (myself) regarding my opposition to Orinda's Downtown Plan.

I perfectly understand that Mr. Hasselman has an entirely different viewpoint. As far as I know, all my statements were accurate.

Always, I have had 3 major concerns:

1. The Downtown Task Force's proposed height change, with a developer's viewpoint, to 55 feet which is way up from the current 35-foot limit in Orinda's General Plan.
2. The lack of a true Town Hall meeting where residents could hear both sides of the issue, and
3. No provision for a public referendum in Orinda for residents to decide the direction of our city (as Walnut Creek did to allow Nieman Marcus into their community).

Mr. Hasselman thinks "there are valid reasons why so many of us visit (cities around the world) and why so few of their residents visit us." That has not been my experience. We have had exchange students reside with us, continuous visitors from Tabor in the Czech Republic (Orinda's sister city), and guests in our home from all over the world.

They love Orinda.

Another family we know agonized about leaving Orinda to return to --- Paris --- after living here for 5 years while the father pursued a Ph.D. at UC Berkeley. They eventually "had to return" to Europe because of an established family business. They stop by Orinda whenever they can.

While I was pleased to see the article on p. A7 of the April 14 issue entitled "Residents Encouraged to Weigh in on (Orinda) Downtown Recommendations" (a great message to residents to get involved), the writers misquoted me with the statement, "I do not appreciate change." That is the complete opposite of what I said.

In the public forum, I actually stated that my father was a career Naval officer and that we had lived in Europe, South America and around the states (I attended 10 schools). As a result, I explained that I appreciate good architecture and completely advocate change. I still travel extensively.

I think the reporters were referring to the end of the meeting when once again the Planning Commission cancelled/postponed discussion of the Downtown Plan for another 3 weeks. I said I was frustrated with the constant "change" in the schedule and agenda --- and that it is impossible for residents to know when to attend meetings to speak out. One interesting quote was from an experienced attorney who stated that if the city of Orinda had to include roads in their budget (as a debt to citizens), Orinda would be bankrupt, too, like a number of other cities in California.

Ann O'Connell-Nye

Orinda

Measure A

Dear Editor:

I am writing to express my unqualified support for Measure A for the Lamorinda schools. I am as disgusted as anyone with the way that the dysfunctional State Legislature has played politics with school funding and repeatedly robbed our local schools of their core funding. But I am not willing to let the Legislature wreck one of the best school districts in the country. Acalanes has consistently outperformed other districts by any measure, and has done so with a lower per pupil cost than its successful Bay Area peer districts. It has done this by relying on a lean administration, lots of parental involvement, community support through the PTA and LASF, and - yes - by passing temporary parcel taxes when necessary to fill in the gaps created by Sacramento.

I urge all Lamorinda voters to vote Yes on Measure A in the ongoing mail-only ballot!

Thomas Hagler

Lafayette

Editor:

The schools of the Acalanes Union High School District have long been an essential thread of the local community fabric. Current and projected budget cuts will truly devastate our outstanding student educational experiences.

I have had the pleasure of being a science teacher, principal and district administrator in the AUHSD for over 15 years. Working with our students, staff, parents and community has given me a unique perspective on instructional programs, support services and extra curricular activities. It is tragic that all programs are in dire risk to be irreparably dismantled next year.

Class sizes have risen to an average of well over 30 students in many courses. Administrative expense has been reduced by 20% in recent years. All employees have made significant salary and benefit concessions. Without a local solution, we now must drastically reduce our highly successful programs and support services to balance the budget. Do not let the State economic crisis destroy our schools and undermine our rich tradition of quality high schools. Support Measure A, a short-term, local solution to maintain highly valued programs. Measure A will bridge the funding gap during this economic downturn.

If you value our quality schools, support Measure A.

John T.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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