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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

The City of Lafayette was incorporated with the idea of keeping expenses to a minimum and to provide three basic services. They are Public Safety, Planning and Public Works services. Over the years, the city staff has mushroomed to a point that some employees make over \$250,000 per year to run a city of 25,000 people.

When the city was putting together a budget during the worst recession since the 1920's, the City Council said they were looking at everything to cut. The only thing that was off the table was a raise for city staff. While other governments are cutting back, the City gave its employees raises. Even the small Parks and Recreation Department has an employee making \$139,000 per year.

Now the City Council is considering becoming a Charter City so it can raise taxes. Former mayor Erling Horn said he has never seen "willy-nilly spending" by the council.

Here are a couple of examples of "willy-nilly spending."

How about the proposed \$720,000 trail along Murray Lane that the majority of the residents of Murray Lane oppose? This trail basically goes nowhere.

Another example is the BMX bike park that is supported by a special interest group. This will bring teenagers from other cities in the Bay Area. The city will then have to increase the work load for the employees of the park department to monitor this park for safety and to pick up trash. Also, with the increase of traffic to and from this activity, the police will also have extra work. This activity will increase ongoing expenditures.

This seems like "willy-nilly spending" to me. If the City has enough money to build trails that most residents do not want, BMX bike parks that will increase police and city staff responsibilities and increase liability from lawsuits, then they do not need to raise our taxes by becoming a Charter City.

John Briggs
Lafayette

Editor:

I enjoyed Mr Kendall's letter. He apparently believes in environmentalism deeply. However environmentalism sometimes violates obvious common sense. However much particulate matter leaf blowers put in the atmosphere, it is an insignificant quantity compared to that blown into the air by the wind. This should be obvious to everyone. I believe there is an impulse among environmentalists to ban all gas engines used for yard work. Leaf blowers were in Orinda before incorporation. They are necessary. Operating a leaf blower is not really pleasant. I hear leaf blowers all over my neighborhood (Glorietta). However the sound does not bother me because I know they are necessary.

Henry R. Pinney
Orinda

Editor:

A few of our Luddite Orindan neighbors deem leaf-blowers to be inherently ruinous to local ambience, health, and happiness. They claim the noise interferes with their quiet time and so a complete ban is needed.

Leaf-blower scofflaws would be reported by spying neighbors to the decibel-police. (perhaps combining with the roaming fireplace-burning cops). To get rid of leaves and things, brooms and rakes (AKA quiet stuff) should (no, must) be compulsory,

I present the leaf-blower defense.

Use of leaf blowers and other outside powered tools have been restricted in Orinda to certain days and times for years in a workable civic balance. Most Orindans find these machines quite tolerable, earth-friendly, and useful. Leaves will fall and weeds and grass must be cut. In such a world noise happens. Semi-rural does not mean guaranteed cave-like silence. Have any of these folks actually lived in a full, not semi, rural place? There are machines, engines, cows, chickens, dogs, trucks, and other really loud things all over the place. And then there are the non-rural places - Chicago, Oakland, Las Vegas? Talk about noise.

Some leaf-blower ecological virtues

- One cannot effectively sweep pine needles, tree droppings, dried leaf-shards, allergy producing dust, and grit from brick, concrete, bushes, wooden decks, rain gutters, streets, and gravel. There are simply too many nooks and fissures. One could hose more quietly but water is kind of scarce. If we don't gather the dust for disposal, winds will blow it around with much more gusto than my leaf blower that at best moves things a few feet.

- If we do not blow all this stuff into a pile to put it into the green container for conversion into mulch or buried, it would sit there awaiting Orinda's big winds to really pollute the atmosphere and mess up neighbors' yards.

- Leaf blowers are much more ecology-friendly than any broom or rake. A power blower greatly assists removal of pollen, dust, and other unfriendly items not amenable to broom/rake technology. The leaf blower ranks high on the health-promotion scale.

- Have our resident zealots no consideration of Orindans of a certain vintage where raking, sweeping, and pushing mowers are not as easy as for these rugged ordinance-seekers (who probably hire others to sweep anyway). It

takes much more labor to sweep and rake and with less effect on property cleanliness.

That's why God created motors.

These righteous Luddites cruelly accuse my leaf-blower of combining with other mechanized gadgets to contribute to global warming, cause cancer, exacerbate childhood asthma, and even make icebergs melt - thus lowering ocean levels, thereby creating more noisy beaches.

Should we force this unhealthy and earth-unfriendly change (ban on leaf blowers) on 18,000 Orindans simply because of the personal discomfort of a vocal few? Petty pique and personal umbrage should not form the basis of making the rest of us endure messy and unhealthy sidewalks, drives, and lawns.

One gets exceedingly weary of huffy nanny-scolders and their plaintive "Why can't all of you just be like me"? Such chutzpah!

So to our local 'Ban the Blower' Orindans: just endure your sporadic auditory travails - but quietly please.

Note to Orinda City Council: Let the noise ordinance alone.

Joe Moran

Orinda

Editor:

We are war with radical Muslim nut cases blowing themselves up and killing U.S. Marines and others.

We have a City Council and Planning Commission in la la land wrestling with downtown height recommendations.

Our State Capital is dysfunctional. We have the most corrupt National Administration in the history of our country.

We have a movement to disembowel our Fire Department.

And the main concern of some our enlightened citizens is leaf blowers.

Get a life.

Donald P. Tafjen

Orinda

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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