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## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I would like to clarify your reporting of the Lafayette City Council meeting where the proposed election to make Lafayette a Charter City was tabled. The complaint about berms on Carol Lane was prefaced by saying that the city has not spent its road funds wisely and cited as an example the berms as well as a paved "walking trail" whose width varies from about 4 feet to about 4 inches.

In addition to that opposition, I stressed that in today's world, every level of government needs to spend less, not more. Also demographically Lafayette has a large percentage of retired seniors on fixed incomes and in an economy with limited investment opportunities.

Yours very truly,  
Betty J.L. Knudson  
Lafayette

Editor:

"No man is good enough to govern another man without the other's consent." - Abraham Lincoln

Certain officials in Orinda, their appointees & paid employees may not have received this lesson in civics. A plan has been brewing to radically change the character of Orinda. It is in part based upon a dated survey of older residents who supposedly yearn to move from their ranch style homes to condos in downtown. The plan is the brainchild of a select group of developers who have a "vision" for our town.

Recent meetings of the Planning Commission have been attended by overflow crowds of Orindans interested in learning about this proposed plan. There is serious concern amongst the electorate about what is taking shape. In September workshops are to take place to involve the populace regarding downtown Orinda. If those in power are intent on revising the existing city plan, then a professional assessment/survey of the needs & desires of citizens in Orinda with respect to our downtown is required. An independent urban planner should be involved in the planning process as it goes forward. Only in this manner will the governed be heard, trust in the process & give their consent. Most of us who moved to Orinda did so for good reasons. We can preserve its best attributes while improving its appearance. Don't be fooled as to what is being planned. You have a say.

Dr. Bob Larsen  
Orinda

Editor:

Shame on me! I ignored the issue of Lafayette considering the issue of changing to a charter city. I hadn't realized the implications. Now I read that the city of Bell in S. California changed to charter city, which allowed them to circumvent state law in some cases. As a result, (and because their population got involved too late) their city manager earned almost \$678,000 pa, assistant city manager over \$375,000 and city council members \$100,000. I am not saying that population in Lafayette would allow this to happen, I think we are too observant. Nevertheless, it is a cautionary tale and relieving cities from State mandates is not a good thing.

Moral of the story: all issues are important and the citizen need to be aware, especially when an out of the blue proposal comes up from a city.

Leonard Dorin  
Lafayette

Dear Editor,

John Briggs (letters, 7/21) seems to delight in sending the same misinformation to every newspaper. I confess I'm getting a bit tired of correcting him, but I suppose if he can send his errors I can send my corrections. Here's some suggested corrections to Mr. Briggs' letter:

Let's look at some facts. The park department proposes spending \$343,000 (not \$720,000) on storm drain improvements, a decomposed granite path and landscaping, both along Murray Lane and inside the Community Park, that will provide safe access to the Community Park from Burton Valley, was campaigned fiercely for by neighbors and is part of Lafayette's Trails Master Plan.

The City is also working with experienced engineers to provide a professionally designed and supervised Bike Park which will be used primarily by local youth and directs children to a safe area that doesn't destroy private or public property. The City has consulted their insurer to ensure that this avoids the problems that San Jose had when they allowed jumps to be built by the neighbors with no oversight, no professional guidance and no review.

These projects are using non-tax funds that are earmarked for recreation projects and do not use general fund monies. The money for these projects can only be used for parks and recreation and can not be used "for roads, more police and other things," unless by "other things" Mr. Briggs means "parks" and "recreation".

Jeff Peacock

Lafayette

Leaf Blowers

Editor:

In the 7/21 issue of Lamorinda Weekly, a Mr. Moran stated that wind stirs up more pollutants than leaf blowers. While this may be correct over a very large, very windy area it is not true in the city of Orinda and certainly not true for the local area--the neighborhood--where the machine is used.

The typical wind speed in Orinda is about 5-10 mph whereas leaf blowers move the air at 200+ mph, 20-40 times faster. Additionally, leaf blowers direct the air directly down at the debris kicking much more of it into the air than even a wind of like speed would do.

Furthermore, the wind speed at ground level is only about half of even the 5-10 mph at the altitude where it is normally measured, so the wind speed at ground level of a leaf-blower is 40-80 times that of the typical wind at ground level in Orinda. Put another way, the wind would have to be blowing at better than 400 mph (74 mph is hurricane force) to produce the same effect at ground level as a leaf blower.

Once the pollutants are airborne, the light, ambient wind spreads them around the area.

Now, multiply this effect by the hundreds if not thousands of leaf blowers used in Orinda daily and the conclusion is obvious: Love them or hate them, leaf blowers do, in fact, increase air pollutants far in excess of that produced by the wind.

Bill Brown  
Orinda

Editor:

I enjoyed Mr. Pinney's response to Mr. Kendall's letter regarding the banning of leaf blowers. His last sentence sums up his position to me. "The sound does not bother me..." I envy him. The most casual survey of Lamorinda folks will reveal a lot of people who are bothered by leaf blowers, to some degree, for various reasons. I can't say it is a majority but I don't find that relevant. What is relevant to me is that these are our friends and neighbors that are being bothered by an activity that has a ready and inexpensive alternative. That's all I need to know for me to tell my gardner to stop using his blower and to support a ban.

William Cooper  
Moraga

Editor:

Several recent letters have mocked those proposing a ban on leaf-blowers in Orinda by arguing that "the wind" is, anyways, the real culprit in spreading particulate matter around our neighborhoods. Mr. Joe Moran, for example, argued, in a 500+ word letter printed in the July 21st edition of this paper, when speaking about dust on his property, that "winds will blow it around with much more gusto than my leaf blower that at best moves things a few feet."

Really? I can't pretend to know how powerful Mr. Moran's own leaf blower might (not) be, but let's look at the facts. Data from local weather stations shows that the wind in Orinda typically blows at 5-15 mph, with occasional gusts to 20-30 mph. The best-selling, gas-powered, backpack-style leaf blowers favored by Orinda's hired hands, however, blow air at a rate of 135-180 mph. On a larger scale, such tornado-force winds can tear roofs off of frame houses, lift heavy cars off the ground and throw them, and uproot trees. Yikes! Consumer Reports' "Buying Guide to Leaf Blowers" notes that "gas blowers are enough to require to ear protection." In addition, they recommend users, "wear goggles and a dust mask when blowing. And keep people and pets away from the work area." Further, the EPA and the California Air Resources Board advise us to "avoid using leaf blowers."

Ignoring the science showing noise/particulate pollution, Mr. Moran and his pro-blower cohort argue that gas-powered blowers save hired gardeners' time (and therefore Orinda homeowners' money) and are a valuable tool for the elderly who maintain their own yards. Refuting Mr. Moran's first point, a video (see QuietOrinda.com website) shows a wife with a rake cleaning her share of the family's autumn leaf-filled yard more quickly (and quietly!) than her leaf-blower-wielding hubby. Refuting Mr. Moran's second point, a SoCal grandmother in her late 50's proved, in a publicly-viewed contest of woman v. machine organized by the Los Angeles Dept. of Water & Power's Leafblower Task Force, that she could rake and broom as fast as a leaf-blower wielding opponent.

So, in the end, the research shows that leaf blowers don't actually save time (or, therefore, money) and instead create harmful noise/particulate pollution. I hope that the City Council will take action to ban leaf-blowers in Orinda.

Sincerely,  
Eileen McPeake  
Orinda

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