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Lafayette Civic News continued

Tour of Downtown EBMUD Pathway

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Consultant Ian Moore addressing tour participants at the first stop behind the Veterans Memorial Building. Photo C. Tyson

The Aqueduct right-of-way is located between Mount Diablo Boulevard and Highway 24.

“Residents and community leaders have seen this site as a great opportunity with significant challenges for years and now we have the resources, thanks to a Caltrans Community Planning Grant, to ask and find answers to the tough questions including how to develop

public access along an aging drinking water pipeline, how to cross busy roadways, how to navigate steep grades, how to tie the pathway into the community, and ask who would maintain a pathway in this location,” said Moore.

Back in 2006 the Lafayette Bikeways Master Plan identified studying the Aqueduct as a high priority project, as part of an overall

plan to improve safety and identify and prioritized bikeway needs.

“Our job on this study is to consider all the options and demonstrate what the pros and cons are of the various options so that residents and elected officials can make an informed decision about how to proceed,” Moore explained. “We’ll be talking with local business owners and residents and hosting a couple of evening workshops showcasing these options in the next several months.”

Along the route of the tour, site specific design issues came up at five stops. “We heard while walking the site that folks are concerned about crossing at street level at Oak Hill Road and First Street because of traffic speed and driver inattention even if the trail crossing were to be protected with a traffic signal,” said Moore.

Many of the tour participants noted a surprising amount of underutilized space under the freeway near the final tour stop at Brown Avenue. Ideas like a possible dog park, a trail head or an

opportunity for a park were suggested.

The city has a number of stakeholders in the potential project, including EBMUD, Caltrans, East Bay Regional Park District, and BART. “Let’s do technical analysis to look at all the possibilities,” said Leah Greenblatt, explaining the purpose of the study at the first stop of the tour.

A river runs under it - existing pipes that transport water are under the southern 50 feet of the aqueduct right of way. Moore said that EBMUD is sensitive about soil disruption directly above the large, aging pipes - describing design options as “constrained.”

Later this fall there will be focus groups with adjacent property owners and a public workshop. The public is invited to send comments and concerns via the www.lafayettepathway.com website. The Bikeways Master Plan, background information and the opportunity to sign up for future emails can also be found on the website.

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Flip This House, Please

By Cathy Tyson



Interior of foreclosed home prior to floor to ceiling renovation. Photo C. Tyson

From ugly duckling and public nuisance to, many hope, Cinderella after a vigorous makeover. As reported in our July 21 issue, a vacant property near the El Curtola Bridge was so dilapidated that animals were getting inside and the County Building Inspection Department had declared the rotting back deck to be a hazard.

The property was recently purchased by Stan Wahl, a contractor, in partnership with Carolyn Lacy of Contemporary Housing Solutions LLC. They plan to quickly renovate the home and put it up for sale.

The interior has been completely cleaned out and work has begun on updating the four bedroom, three bath home. The sagging rear deck and all the yard debris have been removed.

Although there were a number of substantial liens against the property the pair now has a Quit Claim deed, along with architectural plans that keep the original footprint and roof height. They plan to re-configure the awkward entry to open up the main living space, moving the front door and providing a view straight through the home

to the rolling hills beyond.

The team anticipates the remodel from the ground up will take approximately three months. If all goes according to plan, by the first of next year the foundation will be stabilized, floors leveled, a new roof and new sheetrock installed, two completely new bathrooms and a high end kitchen will be in place - all awaiting potential buyers.

“On behalf of the City and the neighbors we are very pleased that it’s progressing so quickly,” said Code Enforcement Officer Mark Robbins.

Fire District Faces Serious Financial Pain

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Fire fighters leaving the Board of Supervisors meeting Photo Cathy Tyson

In a letter to the Lafayette Homeowners Council, Louder said the District has reduced expenditures by over \$6 million by eliminating 15 positions, controlling overtime, deferring capital purchases and improvements and eliminating entire programs. The International Association of Firefighters Local 1230 has deferred awarded raises until the 2011/2012 fiscal year. The cuts account for less than a 7% reduction in the total \$94,479,673 budget for fiscal year 2010/2011.

“The department is trying to improve efficiency and effective-

ness,” said Louder. “It’s a dynamic situation - we are trying to maintain adequate coverage,” adding that neighboring communities, notably the Moraga Orinda Fire District, will provide mutual aid if a call comes in closer to one of their stations.

Although the new Chief came to simply introduce himself at the September 27 Lafayette City Council Meeting, he received a number of pointed questions about potential station brown outs in Lafayette. Residents were concerned about one of the three stations in town closing, criteria for brown outs, and specifics regarding

District finances.

Resident and municipal employee Brian Smith said, “It gets pretty frustrating and overwhelming pretty quick,” explaining that civic workers are giving back 6%-7% salary and have furlough days. “I hope firefighters can make sacrifices like we do.”

At a Board of Supervisors meeting the next day, Supervisor Susan Bonilla summarized the problem. “We realize we are facing a crisis here. We can all agree we’d rather not make these choices - property taxes are going down - the consequence is that revenue decreased. We have to figure out the value of safety - what we’re willing to spend.” To that end the Supervisors will be looking into a parcel tax for future funding.

For now there are no Lafayette fire station closures or brown outs. The Board of Supervisors did approve a contingency funding plan that uses \$8.7 million in reserves and deferred \$4 million in workers compensation. They will be scheduling a Board workshop to discuss options and strongly advocated for a dialogue between residents and the District about budget realities.



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