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Letters to the Editor

Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writers and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and town (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only), and should be 350 words or less. email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: **Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570**

Editor:
Within the past month, I have attended three public meetings in the town of Moraga. The first was a Planning Commission meeting on September 20, 2010 during which the Dollar Tree application in the Rheem Shopping Center was discussed and considered for approval. I would like to commend the members of the Planning Commission for creating an environment in which opinions and comments from both citizens and applicants could be expressed. The commission conducted itself with thoughtfulness and intelligence in its deliberations and treated all those in attendance with respect.

The second event I attended was Candidates' Night on October 5, 2010, an event that was sponsored by the Moraga Citizens Network. This event provided an excellent, non-partisan and inviting environment in which the town's citizens could hear the views of candidates running for the Town Council and pose questions to the candidates. The event was videotaped, and a link was made available to allow viewing for those who were unable to attend. The organization of this event was professional, and the information obtained was extremely valuable.

The third event I attended was the Moraga Town Council Meeting on October 13, 2010 during which appeals to the Dollar Tree application approval were discussed. Having been quite impressed with the last two forums, I was anticipating a similar experience. I could not have been more wrong. The tone of this meeting rapidly became unprofessional and antagonistic. With the exception of Council Members Dave Trotter and Karen Mendonca, the members of the Town Council, including the Mayor, treated the citizens of our community with disdain, disrespect and arrogance. As a forty-six year resident of Moraga, I was both embarrassed and outraged at the improper manner in which this meeting was conducted. I would like to encourage the Town Council to remember that they represent the members of this community. Many of the citizens who addressed the Town Council are the very people who make this community exceptional. They are the parents volunteering in our schools, raising funds to better our education system, running small businesses and shopping in Moraga. To disregard or belittle the opinions and needs of these citizens is to the true detriment of this community; for without their efforts, the future of our town is very grim indeed.

Kay Gertmenian
Moraga

being manipulated.
My other concern at the meeting is that people who are not sufficiently aware of the constraints the City works under are making proposals without recognizing what the facts are. For example, the vast majority of property tax is kept by the State. As a result, the costs for City services for new development, like fire and police protection and schools, can exceed the added income from our share of property tax. When we studied development in Gateway-Wilder, we discovered that this was likely to be the case. We were not the first to find this out; Petaluma had done a pioneering study that had the same result. Both real estate prices and wages have increased in the last 23 years, so there would have to be a separate study to find out what the situation is now.

Some people seem to think that the existing General Plan uses the term "semi-rural" to refer to downtown. The General Plan only uses the term to refer to residential areas, and has a clear definition of what it means. The Plan uses the term "village" to refer to downtown areas and discusses what that means.

There seems to be an assumption that many seniors living here now want to move to downtown condos. I'm 83 years old. I will stay in my house for as long as I can and when I can't take care of myself any more, I'll move to an assisted living facility. My friends seem to think the same way. Those who sold their houses moved far away to be closer to family or live in more rural areas.

Lily Regelson
Orinda

Editor:
On October 7th I attended the Orinda School Board Candidates Forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley. The Forum was provided to give Orinda voters a chance to hear from each candidate. The audience was also given the opportunity to submit questions for the five candidates to answer. The OUSD Candidate Forum is now available to watch on YouTube. The time you spend watching the forum may be one of the best investments you ever make in your children's future. The YouTube link is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yG9gea7cXN8>.

Bob Kadie
Orinda

Editor:
Thank you for publishing the excellent article on Date Rape (10/13/10) by Margie Ryerson.

As a pediatrician, I want to add that all women of child-bearing age (including young teenagers!) should be educated about emergency contraception ("Plan B" or "the morning after pill"). This medication can prevent pregnancy if taken within a few days of unprotected sexual intercourse. It does NOT cause abortion. For excellent information readers can consult the U. S. Dept of Health website: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/emergency-contraception.cfm#h>

Young women under age 18 must obtain a prescription for emergency contraception. I encourage all parents and pediatricians to talk frankly to their teenagers about this, so that if there is a tragic event like a date rape, the young woman can immediately obtain medical help to prevent pregnancy.

Eileen Benway, MD
Lafayette

Editor:
County district attorneys are the most powerful law enforcement officials that concern our daily lives. Their decisions affect civil liberties, personal security, fairness of business practices and public officials' integrity. Yet too often they hide their grave failings behind the amorphous veil of "prosecutorial discretion," shielded from public disclosure, scrutiny and accountability.

Voters ousted D.A.'s in eight counties (including Santa Clara and Sonoma) in June. Contra Costa District Attorney Robert Kochly has mismanaged an office that is infamously wracked by malfeasance, incompetence and nonfeasance. Contra Costa D.A. candidates need to explain their stances on the following issues:

- How specifically will you cleanse your agency?
- Scope of duties: Will you vigorously prosecute white-collar criminals, including identity thieves? Consumer and environmental protection and other civil actions? Public integrity breaches (Assessor Gus Kramer)?
- Budget: How will you ensure that the Board of Supervisors adequately funds your office, including misdemeanor prosecutions? Do you favor reform of the County's "3% at 50" pension scheme?
- Victims' rights: Will you effectively represent victims' interests or will you force them to hire their own attorneys to prod you?
- Annual report: Will you issue regular public reports concerning the above?

We deserve answers.
Jason A. Bezis (attorney)
Lafayette

Editor:
Want a quick way to compare the candidates? Go to www.smartvoter.org, a service of the League of Women Voters Education Fund. Enter your address to

get a personalized virtual ballot with links to each race, and each candidate who has submitted information to us. Alternatively, use the search feature to find specific races or candidates.

If you live in Orinda and want to watch the school board candidates forum, video clips are available at <http://www.smartvoter.org/2010/11/02/ca/cc/race/3571/>.

Ashley Coates
Moraga

MOFD CANDIDATES

Editor:
It's time for a change.
The Moraga-Orinda Fire District has been in place since 1997, and many of the current Board members have been involved since that time. It became apparent to me that, as voters, we have not paid enough attention to this Board when late last year I read about our former Fire Chief's pension plan in the Wall Street Journal. Like many of you, I was shocked at how generous the Board had been with our tax dollars. In these uncertain times, we need someone who is willing to make tough economic decisions to protect our fire district and our tax dollars. We are fortunate that Bob Jungbluth is challenging an incumbent for a seat on the MOFD Board. I served with Bob on the Orinda Planning Commission for a number of years and know he makes informed decisions, and is fair to both the needs of the applicant and the community. He has played a substantial role in streamlining the planning process so that it is easier and more user friendly for our residents. Most importantly, I know him to respect the economic circumstances of both the applicant and the community, and he is diligent in trying to minimize financial impacts on both.

I believe Bob's awareness of these key issues, and his ability to communicate clearly with staff, applicants, and residents qualifies him to serve on the MOFD Board. I hope you will join me in supporting Bob Jungbluth for MOFD.

Richard Westin

Editor:
As casual observers of the political scene in Orinda, we were truly saddened to see that FAIR has decided to embark on a smear campaign against John Wyro who is running for re-election to the MOFD Board, representing our district. John Wyro has served the community of Orinda for decades on the Orinda School Board, the Acalanes Education Fund Board, the old Orinda Fire District Board, the Orinda Infrastructure Committee, and the MOFD Board. He was twice selected as an Orinda Association "Volunteer of the Year." He also serves on the board of the Oakland Museum.

As our MOFD board member, he has voted for the replacement of Station 44 on Moraga Way in Orinda and for seismic upgrades to our other two Orinda stations, as well as the replacement of our dilapidated fire-fighting equipment. He has focused on managing the MOFD's financial resources. Instead of thanking him for his service to our community, FAIR has chosen to mount a shabby campaign attacking his integrity.

We are voting for John Wyro because he is a proven leader and we need his experience in these difficult economic times. We trust him to help make sure our emergency services are there when we need them.

Bob and Patty Frazer
Orinda

Editor:
I ask the voters in Moraga/Orinda Fire District 4 to support John Wyro for re-election. During my time as an Orinda City Council Member, including as Mayor and now currently as Vice Mayor, I have had the pleasure of working collaboratively with John to address public safety issues. John and I worked alongside each other on two campaigns to find additional revenue to fix Orinda's roads, drains, and water pipes. John has been a strong advocate for keeping local control of fire and emergency service in our local community, when others have sought to dissolve the district, meaning that we would revert to having emergency services and fire provided by the County, without local ambulance or paramedic service in Orinda. In a time when our local revenues are under attack by the state, and when property tax revenues are either static or declining, it is very important that we retain a board member who is fiscally prudent and extremely experienced, so that effective and timely fire, paramedic and ambulance service are provided locally to our community. Please vote for John Wyro for the Moraga/Orinda Fire District Board on November 2.

Victoria Smith
Orinda

Editor:
Vote for Bob Jungbluth for MOFD Board
We need someone on the board who will exhibit some fiscal constraint. I think Bob Jungbluth can be that person. In the 13 years that John Wyro has been on the MOFD board:
- Orinda taxpayers have increased taxes to MOFD from \$5 million to \$11 million, growing at over twice the rate

of inflation.
- The fire district now spends almost \$20 million per year; more money than Orinda and Moraga combined. No other city in the Bay Area spends that much of its budget on emergency services; and the services we get are good but no better than our neighbors.
- While the fire district has spent \$170 million in taxes over those 13 years, they have also accrued \$85 million in debt and unfunded pension liabilities - 50 cents of debt for every dollar spent. When is this going to stop?
The pension bonus that the board gave to retiring Chief Nowicki last year, which they said they were unaware they were doing, is going to cost the taxpayers another \$3 million dollars over the chief's retirement.
It is time for a change. We need someone new to look after our tax dollars. Please vote for Bob Jungbluth for MOFD board. Thank you.

Rose Anne Critchfield
Orinda

LAFAYETTE CANDIDATES

Editor:
Retain Valuable Leadership on the Lafayette School Board
Teresa Gerringer and Art Kapoor are dedicated, knowledgeable and thoughtful members of the Lafayette School Board and I would like to urge the voters of Lafayette to return them to the Board. Lafayette School District's record of success, in the face of unprecedented budget reductions, is testament to fine leadership they have provided.

The Lafayette Schools are known for their excellence. Our facilities are up to date, our fiscal management is conservative, and our financial position is strong. The children of Lafayette continue to benefit from low class sizes and a holistic curriculum that incorporates specialized instruction in art, music and science.

The challenges facing schools in the next several years are large, and the learning curve for a new board member is long. Our children will be best served by keeping these seasoned board members who understand the nuances and complexities of the challenges ahead.

It is clear that Lafayette residents view their schools as an asset. Make sure they remain an asset - Reelect Art and Teresa.

Ann Appert
Lafayette

Editor:
Change can be good...when needed. However, the City of Lafayette is currently well managed and in good fiscal shape, considering the economic times we are facing. Not many cities can make that claim and things are going to get tougher because of the State's economy and budget crisis. We can attribute the excellent health of our city to the current City Council members. The leadership that Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin have exhibited during their last terms of offices, such as maintaining balanced city budgets with realistic reserves, the funding and construction of a beautiful new library, securing and preserving open space and our ridge lines, and a reduction in the number of failed roads throughout the city, prove that they can manage successfully through tough times and work with a wide variety of interest groups. They are council members for the entire city, not just the vocal few. Their open mindedness, fairness and experience cannot be easily replaced. Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin have maintained their passion for Lafayette and wish to continue to share with us their time and expertise. So, why would we make a change? Why would we elect someone with an unproven track record when we have two stellar, proven candidates in Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin? Lafayette is working, and working well! Why change?

Cheryl Noll
Lafayette

Editor:
Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin are strong advocates for the long-term best interests of Lafayette and its residents, and I fully support their re-election to the Lafayette City Council.

Brandt and Don have been essential catalysts in making Lafayette what it is today. Long-term residents have seen the improvements through the years; new residents have chosen Lafayette because of those improvements. Neither Brandt nor Don would begin to claim that they are solely responsible. We are a city fortunate to have many community-minded volunteers, great schools, an active business community and an active faith community, and what has been accomplished is the work of many. But the city council needs to provide the civic leadership, and Brandt and Don have been strong leaders.

These are not easy times. All cities are facing fiscal challenges. Lafayette is in better shape than most because of the prudent policies adopted by the city council, but there are many hard decisions that must be made. Brandt and Don have shown that they can make the hard decisions. But most important, they have shown that when they make decisions, they listen carefully to all viewpoints, they bring to their decision making their broad professional experience and civic experience, and then they base their decisions on what is best for Lafayette. Lafayette has been well-served by having Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin on the city council. Please keep them working for us the next four years.

Carl Anduri
Lafayette