

Civic News



Dana Green
Lic. #01482454



Sarah E. Kellar
Lic. #01805955

(925) 339-1918
DanaGreen@rockcliff.com
DanaGreenTeam.com

Happy Holidays! Thank you for helping
make the Dana Green Team
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again!



J. Rockcliff

Lafayette

Public Meetings

City Council Monday, January 10, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Planning Commission Monday, January 3, 7:00 pm
(scheduled meeting on December 20 has been canceled)
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Design Review Monday, January 10, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center in the Arts & Science Discovery Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Lafayette: www.ci.lafayette.ca.us
Chamber of Commerce: www.lafayettechamber.org

Police Report



Never a lender nor a borrower be, 12/4/10 Lafayette police responded to the report of a stolen rental car. Apparently, the accused took the 1960's jingle "Let Hertz put you in the driver's seat" literally. The victim (and police) didn't appreciate the "borrower" not returning inquiry phone calls.

'Tis the Season, 12/5/10 A Petar's customer punched another customer in the face in the wee hours of December 5. How very unusual! The puncher, who was shorter and weighed less than the punch-ee, was feeling his oats; while the punch-ee was

feeling the pain. Puncher was placed under citizen's arrest.

Was it something I said? 12/4/10 Just hours before, at that very same establishment, a short woman hit a tall man in the face with a glass. The man declined medical attention and declined to press charges. Maybe she was drinking p.i.n.k. vodka and wanted him to see the world through rose-colored glass(es).

All I want for Christmas... 12/10/10 Two robbers hit employees and customers with pepper spray, then snatched a Play Station 3 game console from Radio Shack and fled the scene by car (only to play Grand Theft Auto later?). The victims were treated and released.

Homeowner Planning to Appeal Addition Decision

By Cathy Tyson



The Polichio family in front of their Burton Valley home. Photo Cathy Tyson

Burton Valley homeowners Joe and Noelle Polichio refuse to take no for an answer. They are appealing a decision of the Planning Commission that does not allow them to build a second story addition to their Lucas Drive home.

It's been a roller coaster for the family. The Design Review Commission considered the project at a number of meetings, and on September 13, conditionally approved it after some modifications were made. Then in October, neighbors William Wahlander and John Woolery appealed that decision to the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission heard the matter twice and directed the applicants to make significant

changes to reduce the size of the project. The latest version was downsized by 189 feet, but since the process began the project has shrunk by 31% from 1,580 square feet for the second story addition to 1,084 square feet. The majority of Commissioners at the third meeting felt it still wasn't enough.

Joe Polichio describes his frustration, "This is a property rights issue. The City is disregarding its own guidelines." Noelle adds, "I wish the opposition could recognize that we love our beautiful Burton Valley neighborhood just as much as they do, and we're just trying to add to the existing charm of the neighborhood while accommodating our growing family." She

points out that there are five two-story homes on Lucas Drive.

The Polichios figure they are committed to the project, "it makes sense to see it through." Indeed they have paid for their architect to prepare several iterations of the project and recently hired an attorney to go to bat for them.

With a lot constrained by trees, the only way to go is up. Since they have two small children, they wanted all of the bedrooms together on the second floor.

"The major issue is compatibility," said William Wahlander, who opposes the project and lives adjacent to the home, at the third meeting of the Planning Commission to review the project. The trouble is "compatible" can mean different things to different people. Wahlander also noted the average size of homes in the immediate neighborhood is substantially smaller than the proposed addition.

From the beginning, city staff agreed with the homeowner and architect: "In staff's opinion, the applicant has made extremely significant modifications....staff recommends conditionally approving the project."

Unfortunately for the homeowner, ultimate approval is not up to staff, but rather the Planning Commission. However even its decision can be appealed to the City Council.

Attorney David Bowie, representing the applicant, argued that the home is compatible, explaining that notices of the hearing were sent to homes within a 300 foot radius as required; within this area are a number of two-story and split level homes. He also pointed out that the size of the home is consistent with objective City requirements and there is no

regulation that says you have to make your home average size.

He concluded that, "Homogeneity is not the standard here," unlike the cookie cutter developments of Brentwood and Antioch.

Architect Ken Hertel was, "saddened that Wahlander doesn't see all the changes - there is significantly reduced mass and appearance." He said there are five recently approved second story additions in Lafayette - and they are all next to single story homes.

Comments from the audience included a chorus of complaints about "ambiguous standards" that will affect potential buyers and create a ceiling on property values. A number of speakers cited young families, attracted to the quiet neighborhood and good schools of Burton Valley, who should have the opportunity to expand their homes.

One gentleman commented that he was, "Frankly shocked they are going through this agony. It's a tasteful design....times have changed since the 1950's."

A Walnut Creek resident who is shopping for a home is Burton Valley commented that second stories in Lafayette are allowed - but not allowed here. Now she is reluctant to consider buying a fixer-upper. Another fellow called it a, "Quasi-historical preservation zone - without the official title."

Oddly enough also on the evening's agenda was a new 5,000 square foot home on Reliez Valley Court, and an 8,450 home on the site of a demolished 2,200 square foot property on Canyon Road. The difference in both cases is the proposed homes are on larger lots, both over an acre, and tucked away from neighbors.

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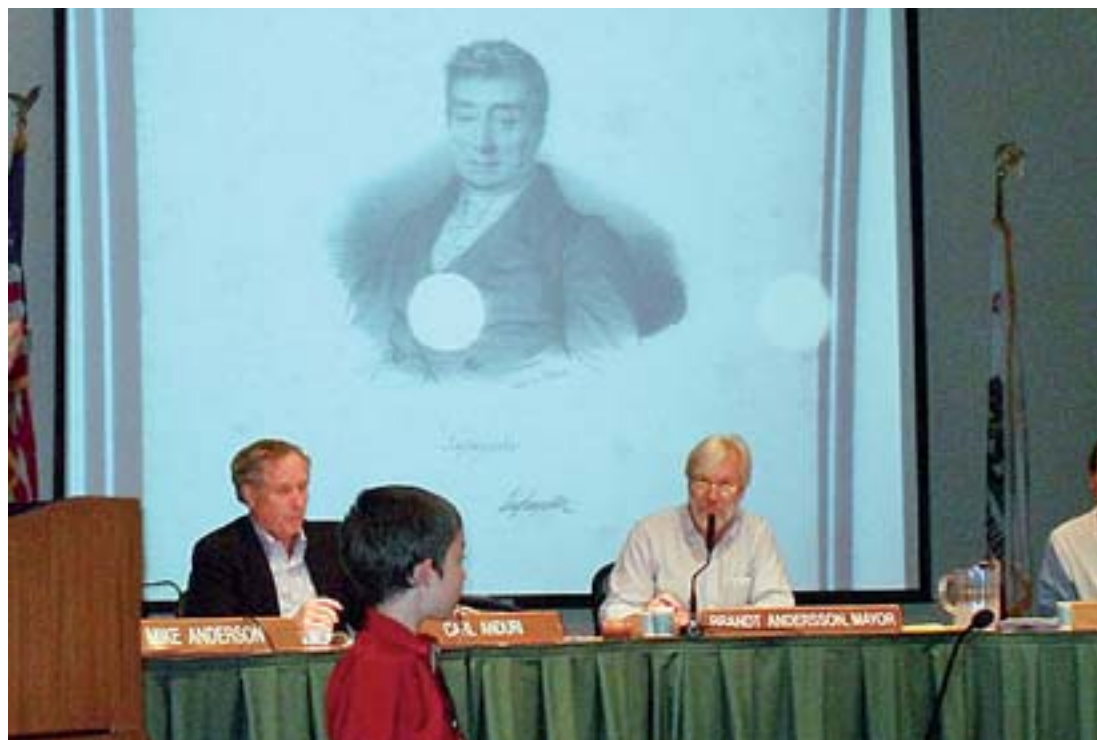
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The Marquis Comes to Town

By Cathy Tyson



Portrait of Marie Joseph du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette (foreground: Noah Sonet) Photo Cathy Tyson

Thanks to the kindness of Gilbert Sonet, a portrait of the Marquis de LaFayette will now reside in Lafayette. Although the City has a statue of the Marquis near Plaza Park, this is the first framed version of the handsome French aristocrat.

While on vacation in France, Sonet came across the local version of a garage sale on a street in Paris with a portrait of Marie Joseph du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette by artist Francois Seraphin Delpech circa 1830. He purchased it, brought the image home in his

luggage, and had it framed.

With charming son Noah, they graciously presented the framed portrait at a recent City Council meeting as a token of appreciation for the generosity the City has shown the Lamorinda Petanque Club. It will be placed in

the Lafayette Library and Learning Center sometime in January.

"I'll echo Carol Federighi in saying that it is great that the first gift of artwork to Lafayette is a portrait of Lafayette. We all appreciate the thoughtfulness of Gilbert and Noah to bring the portrait back from France in honor of their hometown," said Ann Merideth, Community Development Director.

Sonet enjoys the story of the Marquis and believes it's inspirational. A French aristocrat, LaFayette became so inspired by the ideals of the American Revolution that he journeyed overseas and volunteered his military skills. A rich fellow, he could have stayed home and done what was expected of him and lead a life of leisure, but he sought adventure. The young Frenchman became a loyal confidant of George Washington, with whom he shared the hardships of the long winter at Valley Forge. After the American victory, he returned to France - but eventually came back to America where he was hailed as a hero.

City Receives Free Money for Sidewalk Beautification

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Mohindroo analyzed the existing conditions and constraints, looking to optimize improvements without negative impacts to make the project pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

The plan is not complete at the moment, detailed architectural and design work still needs to be done. February 1, 2011, is the deadline to submit a construction authorization request package to the State, or the grant money is at risk. Although there have been complaints by the public about the speed of the process

- this deadline has been the driver of the schedule.

One of the challenging issues is the many driveways - five - and the general layout of the parking lot at the Trader Joe's / Diablo Foods shopping center. This and a proposed u-turn restriction at Happy Valley Road are the main issues of contention on the project. Because "bulb outs" - an extended portion of the corners at the Happy Valley intersection, to accommodate pedestrians - would spill out onto the street, this makes the available

road real estate necessary to negotiate a u-turn impossible.

Bill Eames - former owner of Bills Drugs, now CVS, and Dan Stokes of Diablo Foods shook hands and agreed to look into a parking lot study, hopefully with other merchants on board, to get a better handle on circulation and parking in arguably one of the most congested lots in Lafayette.

After much public comment encouraging the City Council to keep the u-turn, a decision was made to go ahead with the

planning of the project but to consider the u-turn and parking lot issues separately.

Shopping center owners and merchants also hope to have a plan prior to the next City Council meeting in January.

Council members also discussed the pros and cons of a low stone wall, a hedge or a skinny iron fence with some kind of vine or greenery to separate pedestrians from the parking lot. No decision was made, but they did agree to get further information on materials options.