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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,
It is sad to read about the Lafayette Planning Commission's rejection of the Polichio's proposed second story addition to their Lucas Drive home (Dec 22, 2010 issue), particularly as the zoning allows 2-1/2 stories. In the long run, this oppressive stance by the City, in response to neighbors, may limit the upward valuation potential of the neighboring residences whose very owners oppose the improvement. It reminds me of our family's experience in 1994, when Orinda's Design Review Board tried to force us to build our "larger-than-average" house on the lowest portion of our hillside lot where it would have had essentially no view, despite our proposed upslope building site (which they claimed would be "too visible") being zoning compliant. Only after considerable aggravation did we prevail against the City, keeping the uphill view location we enjoy today, and avoiding what would have otherwise been a severe loss in property enjoyment and value; with truly no compensating benefit to anyone. Interestingly, over the years, several neighboring residences expanded, and their larger, newer, construction enhanced the overall street appearance (as well as increasing much-needed property tax revenues). Moreover, home selling prices of even the unmodified houses climbed nicely during the ensuing years.
Owners spend their life savings purchasing their properties, based, in part, on objective zoning allowances. Some later spend another large sum, plus lots of sweat, planning zoning-compliant improvements, only to be arbitrarily blocked, resulting in severe destruction of potential value to their property that far outweighs the purported benefits (if any) to the surrounding community.
The planned second story expansion makes the Polichio house more attractive, will actually enhance the neighborhood and will most likely benefit everyone involved, in the long run. Most importantly, approving it is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,
Joel M. Libove Ph.D.
Orinda

Dear Editor:
Jeffery Segall responding to my letter [December 8, 2010] cites EPA report, "Integrated Science Assessment for Particulate Matter". It is, as he suggests, comprehensive research on atmospheric aerosols (P.M.) from natural and man made sources. The study is very interesting but it is trivialized by (and irrelevant to) Mr. Segall's challenge to leaf blowers. Leaf blowers blow heavy material that settles quickly to the ground.
Mr. Segall simply wants leaf blowers banned in Orinda; a position he claims, reasonable people may differ, and most of us do. I believe leaf blowers, and all noisy tools used in the garden, are best used with consideration for our neighbors. To ban any of them is lunacy in my opinion.
My letter poked fun at ridiculous exaggeration surrounding this subject. Leaf blowers are not a plausible cause of death or ill health and not new technology. To some they are a loud, obnoxious annoyance. Residents and gardeners in Lamorinda have used leaf blowers for decades. Our illness and death rates are not rising with the use of leaf blowers. In fact we are healthier than ever.
Mr. Segall, in his crusade ignores this point. His rant intensifies; a)"… an elder gardener cannot work peacefully in his [garden]…", b) "…when schoolchildren cannot use their backyards on Saturdays because of the cacophony of leaf blowers on their cul-de-sac…", c) "…senior citizens complain that they cannot walk peacefully through their neighborhoods…without the grinding roar of leaf blowers…", d) "The cumulative effect of such leaf blowers operating throughout the day six days a week 12 months of the year raises significant concern about increased P.M.exposure in our community", He must live on an awful cul-de-sac, and might consider moving to a community that has banned leaf blowers.
I, too, am a senior citizen and long, long resident of the Lamorinda community and I walk in many parts of our community. I tend to my garden. When I hear a leaf blower I simply get the idea that my neighbor, (or neighbor's gardener), is cleaning up after working in his/her garden to make things look neater, and in 5 or 10 minutes he/she is done. The little children he highlights, or the pregnant women or those with compromised cardio vascular or respiratory systems in our neighborhood may better be concerned with ambient P.M. from natural sources, wood burning stoves, vehicular emissions, and so many other sources. Leaf blowers are not their problem. Leaf blowers are just loud.
And by the way, not once did Mr. Segall offer to take up my cause. Let's ban loud bass woofers in passing cars – and let's also ban rap while we're at it. Wink, wink.

David K. Lindemuth
Orinda

Editor,
The Orinda Chamber of Commerce and the business community are very excited about planning for future growth in the downtown area. We have long supported the downtown plan, complete with additional parking. The Chamber actively supported most of the work of the PPRTF and the recent zoning changes that helped increase occupancy at Theater Square. We have always been strong supporters of issues like bringing Peet's Coffee to Orinda, and we always champion our businesses. Indeed, we want changes that encourage new businesses to come to Orinda.
Most of you are familiar with our "Shop Orinda" campaign that we believe had a major impact reminding our citizens to Shop Orinda first. A couple of years ago, we launched our "Restaurant Tour" and last March we created the first annual "Live at the Orinda" comedy show. Our goal in sponsoring events like these is to bring the community to the downtown, and to build a symbiotic relationship between Orindans and the many fine shopping and dining opportunities our community offers.
The Chamber is hopeful that Orinda will embrace a proper plan for long-range growth. Like our green City Hall, we should be creating sustainable environments that preserve our scarce resources. We believe the downtown area should be a place that encourages a higher density, pedestrian-oriented community. The people who live downtown will help support our business tax base. Taxes are what enables our community to offer the services we need.
We are also aware that mixed-use development with retail on the ground floor and housing above will not be developed in Orinda without raising the height limit. Knowing the evaluation that takes place in the planning approval process, we are confident any new development approved will be something we can be proud of. There should be room for change.
We believe that Orinda can become a better place with proper planning. Most importantly we want to encourage new development. A place where Orindans want to shop, where friends can meet and dine, where teenagers have a place to go, and where it is apparent that people care about their own community.

Sue Breedlove
(On behalf of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors)

Join our Public Forum

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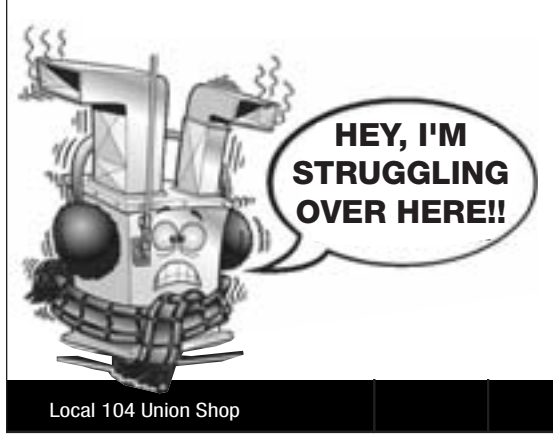

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