

Civic News



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Lafayette

Public Meetings

City Council Monday, January 24, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Planning Commission Monday, January 31, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Design Review Monday, January 24, 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



"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night..." 01/01/11 But blowing up the mailbox can keep postal couriers from their appointed rounds. One poor Lafayette resident filed a vandalism complaint after his mailbox was vandalized for the fourth time in 6 months. Apparently unsatisfied with simply knocking down the box, the perp(s) keep raising the stakes in this frightening game of "return to sender."

Money, money, money, 01/06/11 That's all one customer wanted from Lafayette's West America Bank. Unfortunately, the accused (who was found to be in possession of a

bad check, fake government ID, and a forged driver's license) was charged with forgery and fraud. "Loan" application denied!

I can't see clearly now, 01/02/11 Drunk and arguing, a man broke a car windshield. The police awarded him with a trip to jail. The damaged auto's owner declined to press charges or to cooperate in the investigation. Driving that car until it's repaired should be a breeze.

The Artful Dodger, 01/07/11 Someone broke the rear passenger window of a 10-year-old Lexus parked on Fiora Place and stole an art bag and supplies valued at over \$700 dollars. Repair estimates put the damages at \$250. That's a fair amount of Monet, and we hope police Cezanne the thief very soon.

Stone Wall and U-Turn Get Green Light

By Cathy Tyson

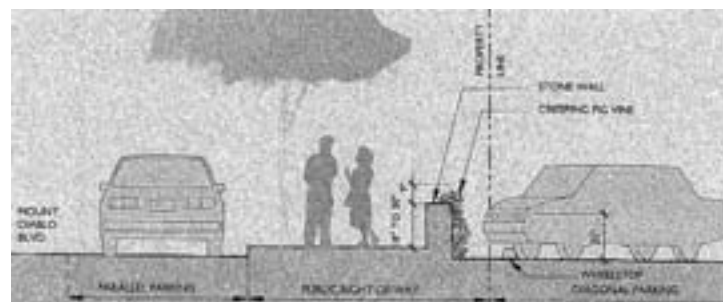


Illustration from City of Lafayette Staff Report

"It wasn't ten minutes after the cones went up that customers started complaining," said Connie Collier of Diablo Foods. "Our customers are very angry." She's referring to cones temporarily installed at the intersection of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Happy Valley Road. Their purpose was to test-drive the effect of loss of U-turn capability in order to accommodate a proposed "bulb-out" for pedestrians at the corner.

A bulb-out is an extension of the sidewalk designed to expand the space available for pedestrians and raise driver awareness of crosswalks. While it provides more room for pedestrians, apparently losing the ability to make a u-turn wasn't ultimately worth it.

The cones are part of a project to improve the sidewalk and streetscape along Mt. Diablo Blvd. from Oak Hill Road to Dolores Drive, funded mainly by a \$1.2 million grant. The finished appearance should look similar to the streetscape in front of the Lafayette Mercantile building. Two key contentious issues remained after general approval to proceed last month – the U-turn dilemma and design of the low stone wall that would front the Happy Valley Shopping Center.

The Council members agreed that they don't want to negatively impact any of the business in the immediate area – so the U-turn will stay.

After much discussion about the pros, cons, expense and maintenance costs of four wall design options, Option 1 was decided upon. This choice had a growing consensus of shop owners along with city

staff. It includes a low stone wall with a creeping fig vine on the shopping center side that allows the most room for parking. The current layout of the busy parking lot at the Happy Valley Shopping Center, home to Trader Joe's and Diablo Foods, encroaches onto city property, up to a foot and a half in places.

The balancing act Council members and the designer hope to achieve is to upgrade the sidewalk and improve access for pedestrians, while weighing the need for adequate space for parking, and still keep the apparently beloved U-turn. Designer Sudhish Mohindroo explained, "We are looking for the least amount of negative impact and still achieve a reasonable solution."

"The intent is to have a sufficient number and width of planting zones to accommodate a thriving landscape element to screen the stone wall on the parking lot side and to complement its appearance along the street side. The greenery also serves to soften the view of the wall on the parking lot side and further addresses the concern about limited parking," said Engineering Services Manager Tony Coe in a staff report.

Property owner Bill Eames expressed his reservations at a recent City Council meeting, "How can we make this pedestrian-friendly and still respect businesses?" Noting the number of accidents that regularly occur in the lot, Collier urged the Council to maximize available parking area, stating, "Our parking lot is a nightmare as it is."

Addendum, issue date 01/05/11, New Name Wanted for Senior Services: The Grand Prize for the Lafayette Senior Services' Give Us a Name contest is an overnight stay at the Lafayette Park Hotel and dinner for two at Yankee Pier restaurant. Submissions welcome until February 22 by phone (925) 284-5050, e-mail at Seniors@lovelafayette.org or by mail at Lafayette Senior Services, 500 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette, CA 94549.

Please submit

Letters and Opinions:

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Neighborhood Works Together to Curb Speeders

By Cathy Tyson

It all started because residents were sick and tired of drivers taking a short cut through their newly-paved residential neighborhood to shave a couple of minutes off their commutes. The hilly, narrow Reliez Station Road has blind turns punctuated by driveways, leaving "a very little strip of roadway to walk safely on," said Christy Joe who spearheaded the traffic calming project, adding that there have been a number of close calls over the years. Neighbors speculated that students heading to Acalanes, along with moms dropping off and picking up kids, were the main culprits.

After many meetings and phone calls, her concern has borne fruit – or rather three sets of speed humps, striping and fourteen signs telling drivers to slow down. Over \$5,000 was raised in necessary matching funds to get the Reliez Station Traffic Calming Project off the ground. One generous fellow even offered to kick in extra if the minimum matching amount wasn't met.

The process started in 2006 with a petition; then in 2008 Joe walked the neighborhood with another petition. Ultimately, of the 91 homes in the area, 69% were in favor of traffic calming, and 51 homeowners donated \$100 each to make it happen.

Many neighborhoods may wish for speed humps, but not many actually garner the necessary support and cash to make it happen. "Christy Joe was the main one who stayed with it all along," said Neighborhood Action Team colleague and neighbor Roy Powell.

A coalition came together on proposing a sidewalk when the

street was repaved, but they later learned it would be prohibitively expensive. However they did have a general consensus on speeders careening down their slender street.

"We just wanted something that would work. Because the neighborhood was so big, a contribution of roughly \$100 per household was enough to make the \$4,800 requirement," commented Powell. Actually \$5,100 was collected on the first attempt from supportive residents. This represents a 70/30 cost sharing of the estimated \$16,000 total project expense.

Back in September of 2002 the City Council adopted a traffic calming program that builds upon Lafayette's long tradition of citizen volunteerism and community participation. Available online is the free Traffic Calming Guidebook, which spells out exact steps to take for Level 1, 2 or 3 projects. In order to acquire Level 3 traffic calming, like the Reliez Station neighborhood is getting, two-thirds approval from all property owners immediately abutting the physical feature is required. The next step is Circulation Commission and City Council approval. The guide can be found on the city website, go to www.lovelafayette.org and type in Traffic Calming in the Search box.

"The City was very helpful," said Powell, adding, "Everyone (in the neighborhood) benefits – but some will benefit more."

"Yes, it was worth it," said Joe, who would recommend it to other neighborhoods although she cautions that the City only takes on one of these projects a year. This spring Reliez Station residents will finally get the stripes, humps and signs they collectively want.

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