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Letters to the Editor

... continued

Editor:
You know about Measure B having spoken with a friend, received a call from a supporter, or seen a sign in a neighbor's yard. As a Lafayette City Council member, I believe the entire community should support schools. Speak with any leading Lafayette realtor to learn that schools attract new homebuyers to Lafayette. As I campaigned last fall, I encountered many new families, each of whom "Loves Lafayette."
The schools' appeal keeps Lafayette's population steady and partially mitigates the decline in home values. New residents volunteer for school and other activities, patronize local merchants, and pay taxes. Their interest in Lafayette strengthens the community. As their children age, these residents will assume other volunteer and career leadership positions and maintain Lafayette's desirability. Measure B is critical for our children. Since 2008, the Lafayette School District's state revenue declined by \$1,100 per student. The need by Sacramento politicians to make-up for state budget shortfalls could reduce per pupil spending by another several hundred dollars next year.
Parents are asked to contribute approximately \$1,000 per child to augment the school budget. As recent homebuyers, many are stretched.
Measure B will alleviate the worst of the potential reductions but does not allow for lavish spending. Measure B, a four-year parcel tax of approximately 50 cents per day, enables us to retain essential programs, provide children with a good education, and maintain Lafayette's appeal for new residents.
Please join me in voting for Measure B and watch for your mail ballot in April.
Sincerely,
Don Tatzin
Lafayette

Dear Fellow Lafayette Residents,
This letter is to implore you to support our emergency local parcel tax campaign, Measure B.
I currently live in Lafayette and was a principal here for 42 years. During that time I always inquired as to why a new family moved here. As you probably know, 100% of the families I asked responded, "We moved here for the schools."
Lafayette is an affluent area, but the inverse applies to state funding of our district education budget (we are among the lowest per student funding in the state). Our budget shortfall for 2011-2012 will be two and a quarter million more dollars and result in further cuts.
For some time we have been facing and making conscientious muscle and bone cuts to programs, students, services, and staff, all the while trying our best to keep our children's education the center of our focus.
In addressing these huge cuts in our already decimated budget, our Governing Board, staff and community have determined some of the 2011-12 budget reductions will include, but are not limited to:
Employee layoffs
Four additional unpaid furlough days (resulting in four less teaching days for students) in addition to the two furlough days implemented in the 2010-11 school year.
Increase in health care co-pay for all employees
Cuts to music and science instruction
\$75,000 reduction in technology budget
Layoff of four elementary teachers
Larger class sizes with decreased instructional aide time
Once again, we desperately need our wonderful community to partner in funding our schools. Your support will help mitigate the severity of the impact of the aforementioned cuts the Budget Reduction Plan will require (absent passage of Measure B).
We all acknowledge we moved here for our excellent schools. Please support Measure B. It will really help keep the Lafayette educational experience great!
Best regards,
Ben Shaw

Editor:
First they came for our maintenance staff, and I did not speak out because I did not value their importance.
Then they came for our music program, and I did not speak out because I did not see the worth in learning the arts.
Then they came for our science lab, and I did not speak out because I did not see the need for hands-on learning.
Then they came for our teachers, and I did not speak out because I did not understand the benefit of small class sizes.
Then they came looking for the bright, educated leaders of tomorrow to recruit for college, and there was nothing left to say, for there were no qualified applicants.
Stay informed. Get involved. Work together to establish stable funding for our schools.
Sincerely,
Jennifer Paul
Lafayette

Editor:
I have read with interest the pros and cons of Measure B, the Lafayette School District's Parcel Tax. In my opinion, the citizens of Lafayette are being exploited and frightened by a dire scenario if we do not vote for another increase AGAIN.
The District has gone to the well too many times with the same horrendous school district decline predicted if we do not vote more money to the District. It is time for the District to be forthright with its citizens.
I have two questions.
1)- why is the District only using 10% of its \$3,000,000 reserves. I thought reserves were to be used in an emergency - why ask the citizens to pay more when Lafayette School District is only using \$300,000 of its reserves? Also, Lafayette Arts and Science is donating \$1,700,000 and I am sure the PTAs are also raising money.
2) - whatever happened to the money from the sale of three school sites - Burton Valley, Vallecito, and Ellis. These funds have never been mentioned - are they gone? Is the District using only the interest? How were they spent or do they still exist in the reserve account? Remember, it has only been two years since the District came to us with the same dire predictions. I would think one could ask if the administration is so incompetent that they were not able to forecast a need for more money two years ago or did they play the game of "let's get some now and we can go out for more in two years." I was told that this was the District's plan all along.
Do I want great schools - absolutely. Do I think the citizens are being thought of as gullible and easily scared - absolutely. You may also want to consider that the Lafayette test scores have been falling every year - even with the influx of money. I only ask that you think seriously about the tax and its timing.
I would suggest that we call their bluff and see how many services are reduced if the citizens do not vote for the tax. Perhaps they would dip into their \$3,000,000 reserve.
Charles Baker
Lafayette

Editor:
It has been my pleasure to be a teacher in the Lafayette School District for over ten years. I have always felt so blessed to be part of a district that supports the education of all the students. Teachers, support staff, administrators, community foundations and school board members work together for the common goal of excellent education for all students. This takes time, energy and money.
As most are aware, state funding has been unstable, at best. Every year we are faced with deeper and deeper cuts. For the past three years, we have all worked incredibly hard to keep cuts away from the classroom, while maintaining the excellence in classroom education. This year the teachers had two furlough (unpaid) days, which were taken during regular teacher in-service days, keeping student contact days the same. Next year we are facing an additional four furlough days which will impact the student contact days. Teachers will be forced to make choices about how to provide the same excellence within a shorter timeframe. Measure B will help replace those lost days and preserve the quality education we have fought so hard to keep.
We are all hoping to weather this "financial" storm and maintain a quality education in the Lafayette School District. Please join with me and vote "yes" on Measure B.
Sincerely,
Judy Zenoni

Join our Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda, or one of its communities, that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to letters@lamorindaweekly.com and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum. We will not accept Public Forum submissions regarding a current ballot measure or candidate for public office. Opinions expressed in Public Forum are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.