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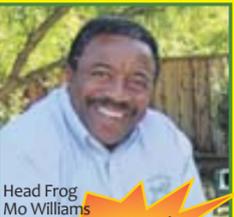
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**Letters to the Editor** ... continued

Editor:  
There is nothing more reflective of a community's social fabric than its level of commitment to education. Seldom is a city viewed as a desirable life destination without a vibrant public education system as a valued resource. Dynamic communities and high-performing school systems are truly inter-dependent social institutions.

During my seven years with the Acalanes Union High School District, I have been blessed to work with a community that cares about public education. The exemplary dedication of the Lafayette School District's educational community has greatly enhanced the ability of AUHSD to assist our students in attaining their post-secondary education goals. The academic, co-curricular, and societal achievements routinely demonstrated by graduates of the schools of Lafayette are truly a combined effort of two districts dedicated to the life-long success of students.

Due to the political stalemate in California, many communities such as Lafayette must now decide whether they wish to have the career paths of students left to compromised funding agreements based on mediocrity as the norm. Without a doubt, these are troubling financial times. It is at times like these that communities really demonstrate what they value most. There is never a great time to ask people to contribute more of their personal income to any cause. However, an investment via Measure B will continue the success story of the Lafayette School District and help maintain the character of Lafayette. Now is not the time to rely upon judgments in Sacramento to direct the paths of our students.

John Stockton  
AUHSD

Editor:  
I have been a member of the Lafayette Elementary School District Governing Board since 1995. Throughout the Measure B campaign I have heard people say "not another tax". While I understand this response, I can honestly say that in all my sixteen years on the governing board I have never seen a worse fiscal situation for the school district. Due to state cuts to our district budget, we have cut administration to the bone. We have raised class size to its highest levels since I began serving on the board. We have shortened the school year and cut back on music and science programs. Salaries for all employees have been cut. All of these cuts impact the education of our children.

I don't think anyone wants another tax, but I also don't think the people of Lafayette want to see our schools fall into mediocrity. Presently we have schools with some of the highest test scores in the state. More than that, we have created an environment that nurtures the whole child, with an emphasis on challenging every child to work to his or her highest potential. We teach students how to be critical thinkers. We have an award-winning music program. Working together with our education foundation, we provide hands on science and art education to every child.

Do any of us want another parcel tax? No, but these are the things the children stand to lose if the parcel tax fails. Please vote yes on Measure B.

Shayne Silva

Editor:  
One of the main reasons that our family moved to Lafayette from Berkeley was for the excellent schools. We greatly value the importance that this community places on high quality educational programs that include music, language, arts and extracurricular activities. We feel fortunate to live amongst other parents who contribute as much time, energy and resources to the schools as ours do.

As Lafayette restaurant owners, we also recognize and appreciate the fact that good schools contribute

to a strong local economy. Without the support of people in this community, businesses here would fail, as many in the nation and California have already. The schools and the businesses are interconnected. We need to continue to support our schools since the state is not.

As parents, we've seen firsthand the cuts that have been made in the Lafayette School District. With 20% more children in every classroom and fewer teacher aide hours, it is difficult for teachers to spend one on one time with students. The District is already very lean, especially after cutting \$2 million over the past three years. As the superintendent mentioned at a Town Hall meeting, the recommended number of administrators for a District our size (3200 children) is fifteen. Our district has managed to cut that down to 11. Further cuts will lower the quality of education that our children receive.

We urge you to vote for Measure B – support our children, our town and our community.

Sincerely,  
Jack Moore and Erika Pringsheim-Moore  
Lafayette

**MOFD**

Editor:  
Having attended Monday evening's Tri-City meeting and reflected upon the outcome, I would like to share a few things.

As the newest member of the FAIR board, I have spent the past year and a half working with and getting to know the other members and have been continuously impressed with the dedication, hard work, and thoughtfulness that the other members have provided in their efforts to help the city of Orinda. Despite some very public vitriol aimed in their direction, they have always maintained a sense of purpose and decorum that I greatly admire.

FAIR has had the courage to address some very controversial issues, and its presentations to the community, including Monday night's, have always been based on analysis of the facts. To an extent that is even surprising to me, FAIR has always acknowledged OrindaCARES's concerns and evaluated those concerns, again and again, based on the facts. Unfortunately, the results have been consistent; there is an inequity between dollars paid and services provided. OrindaCARES's presentation on Monday night referred to their analysis of the data without sharing any specific information. Rather, their spokeswoman described FAIR's facts as "irrelevant" or "beside the point." I assume we are to take her word for it.

The issues around MOFD are complex and deserve much more attention. It is certainly well beyond what could be expected of the council, much like the related infrastructure challenges we face. Yet, an Emergency Services Task Force shouldn't just be about the inequity. We live in an area that faces danger from earthquakes and fires, and it behooves us to take stock of our strengths and weaknesses as a community and coordinate our efforts.

The decision to form a task force is likely one of the most important decisions Orinda's city council will face. Orinda's future as a viable and vibrant community may well depend upon it. If the perception that the past council was not fiscally prudent evolves from relatively minor concerns about the building of City Hall to the much larger potential problem regarding unfunded pension liabilities for MOFD (a point brought up by OrindaCARES,) the present council could be judged much more harshly than their predecessors. I prefer to consider a future of informed and knowledgeable citizens working together to face their challenges. Orindans must demand that the city council members allow us that right by voting to establish an Emergency Services Task Force.

Diana Stephens  
Orinda

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