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Published June 8th, 2011

## Lafayette City Budget Balanced

*By Cathy Tyson*

This year's Lafayette budget is looking just a little rosier than last year for a number of reasons. Due to improving retail sales - apparently residents really are shopping Lafayette first - General Fund revenues have increased over \$200,000 from last year; throw in no pay increases or cost of living adjustments for city employees and keeping actual expenses below projected amounts and it adds up to a balanced budget with an extra \$223 to spare.

The next fiscal year could be even brighter, according to City Manager Steven Falk, "We have seen encouraging signs of growth in the local economy that we believe will increase Lafayette's sales tax receipts by as much as \$300,000 next year."

The City's savings account is nothing short of spectacular - reserves are projected to be \$9.8 million - the equivalent to 86% of General Fund expenditures, substantially over the City Council's target of 50%. That's like a family having over ten months worth of salary earning interest in the bank. "The five year forecast suggests that by continuing to budget conservatively and control expenses, the City will continue to meet its reserve targets in the foreseeable future," said Falk.

Cuts made in December, the middle of the budget cycle, helped keep the overall budget balanced. The biggest savings came from eliminating the canine officer position and trimming city support for the Art and Wine Festival and the Reservoir Run, eliminating the Planning Intern position and stretching out the time between landscape maintenance along with adjusting fees for use of city ball fields.

Support of the banner program was on the chopping block and a request by the Town of Moraga for Lafayette to pay a share of the parking cost at the Skate Park was discussed at a recent City Council meeting. "It's a safety issue," said Jay Ingram of Moraga Parks and Recreation. He asked both Lafayette and Orinda to pitch in 25% each of the cost to pave the gravel parking area.

Although the skate park is located in Moraga, all three Lamorinda municipalities shared the cost of construction and on-going maintenance. The Town of Moraga is now asking Orinda and Lafayette to contribute 25% (or \$67,000) each, while Moraga picks up 50% of the cost of paving.

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[back](#)

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