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Civic News Lafayette

City Weighs Options to Tighten Smoking Regulations

By Cathy Tyson

City leaders are considering more restrictive regulations that could ban smoking in apartment buildings and condominium projects in Lafayette. There's a growing trend in California and individual cities to limit availability of acceptable smoking areas, in a not so subtle nudge toward supporting public health.

The California Air Resources Board classifies secondhand smoke as a "Toxic Air Contaminant;" the World Health Organization and the Surgeon General both agree there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke.

Currently there's a proposed state law in the works, AB-746, that would further restrict smoking statewide; if passed, it wouldn't take effect until 2015.

In State of Tobacco Control, a report card of tobacco prevention measures by the American Lung Association, California earned an "A" for smoke-free regulations that banned smoking from schools to casinos. Many Bay Area cities including Pleasant Hill, Martinez and Alameda got high marks for ordinances that enforce smoke-free outdoor air and smoke-free housing. Concord bans all smoking downtown.

Unfortunately Lafayette earned a surprising "F" grade, due to rules dating back to the 1990s that

were updated in 2009. The current regulations don't allow smoking in retail stores, commercial buildings, elevators, public restrooms, grocery stores and more. The update in 2009 added restrictions for indoor and outdoor smoking on city-owned property – but still allowed smoking on city streets and sidewalks along with inside private residences and some hotel rooms.

The city council received a thorough staff report that offered a range of options to help craft an ordinance that would provide protection to the public in recognition of research that indicates the dangers of secondhand smoke. "Anything that generates smoke is a public health hazard," testified Denise Dennis with the Contra Costa County Public Health Department, to encourage city council members to tighten regulations. "Help us save lives, we are your constituents," said longtime resident Margo Connelly.

Options ranging from restricting smoking at outdoor dining areas to 20 feet away from business' doors and windows to inside and outside of multi-family units were discussed. There was support for some, but not all of the options. Although it was late in the evening, the council directed staff to further investigate five of the 10 suggested options and will review the findings at a later date.

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Letters to the Editor

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email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

In 2006, when America's population was approaching 300 million (now approaching 320 million) and California's population was about 36.5 million (now over 38 million), I was in Bellingham promoting *The Population Fix*. From the audience, a consultant to Pacific Northwest municipalities said he'd never met a mayor of a small town who didn't want to be mayor of a large town, a mayor of a large town who didn't want to be mayor of a small city, or a mayor of a small city who didn't want to be mayor of a larger city.

"Is Moraga Unsustainable" in May 8, Lamorinda Weekly reminded me of him. As power-hungry politicians (a redundancy) create bunches of bumbling bureaucracies telling us where to work, where to live, and how to live, one wonders when the public will recognize the pain of self-inflicted wounds created by perpetual population growth. Experience from China and India suggest when U.S. population reaches 750 million.

California's governor wants a tunnel transporting water under the Sacramento Delta. Definition: "delta--a usually triangular alluvial deposit at the mouth of a river," i.e., he wants to build a river under a river to fill more swimming pools in semi-arid Southern California. He also wants to build a "high-speed" railroad to transport people between the civilized and uncivilized parts of the state. Combine the projects and save money! Pipeline

companies transport multiple commodities through single pipelines. Let's transport water and people through a single tunnel!

Extreme? Not as extreme as adding 25 to 30 million people and 2.5 to 3.0 million people to U.S. and California populations every decade. Unfortunately, as a neuroscientist specializing in the psychology of numbers explained, the largest number the average person--including, apparently, the average Moraga civic leader--can intuitively understand is "7." "For me," one "leader" says, "it's all about funneling federal funding toward established urban areas . . ." Right, it's not about stabilizing the population and protecting solitude and the environment. It's about absorbing dollars from taxpayers in other states. With such self-serving "solutions," no wonder we're in such serious trouble.

Thanks, Lamorinda Weekly, for defining ABAG, CCTA, MTC, OBA, and PDA. Here's one you can add to your list: OPT-US. Its mission statement is, "To enable Americans to determine America's optimal population." Don't bother looking for it on the Internet. It doesn't exist. But it will . . . when America's population reaches 750 million and California's population reaches 90 million. In the meantime, don't forget to ABAG your MTC with your PDA.

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Join our Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities 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.

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