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Game Over for Proposed Bike Park

By Cathy Tyson

It was after midnight when the decision finally came in on the long effort to approve the contentious bike park proposed for Burton Valley's Community Park. A crowd of residents anxious to voice their opinion and a bevy of mostly youthful supporters in blue pro-bike park T-shirts filled the Community Hall to the brim. The June 10 City Council meeting seemed to go on forever; at one point, 9:45 p.m. to be exact, there were still school-age kids in the audience waiting to be heard. The mayor, noting the late hour, made an exception to allow the kids—followed by a number of moms—to speak, out of the usual speaker slip order.

Ultimately the City Council voted against the park, citing a variety of reasons. The proposed 1.8 acre park on a hillside in the Community Park would have cost approximately \$342,000, exclusive of \$100,000 that has already been spent on environmental reports and design work. The City Council's decision removed the bike park item from the Parks, Trails and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan.

"Kids need room to get away from their parents," said Jackson Reilly; another child noted the bike park "would get kids off their digital devices." Alison Hill, a 44-year resident, recalled the drama of the now very popular Lafayette-Moraga trail, "It was going to be the end of us," she continued, "it's the 'new' that people are afraid of."

"Unbelievable," said Rubin Galindo. "This is not right....this is a bunch of hooey." Stanley Middle School student Andrew Torres also opposed the project, stating that "It's unfair that so much money is being spent for so few people." He was struck by the inequity of the situation, since use of the bike part would be free, but "if I play a team sport, my parents have to pay."

After hearing many comments both for and against the bike park, Councilmember Brandt Andersson explained how he came to his decision, pointing out the many services the city provides for seniors and young children. Noting that not all residents of Lafayette are interested in team sports - and that as a percentage of the city population, only a small fraction of the whole prefers activities like soccer, baseball or lacrosse, he said, "I believe for this underserved community, the bike park is a solution." He took the time to visit the site on the weekend before the meeting to observe exactly how many folks are walking - turns out, not that many, doubting the testimony that an overwhelming number of people are quietly enjoying the area on a daily basis.

Other council members saw it differently; Mark Mitchell was concerned about liability and risk, and the secluded nature of the site, which can't easily be monitored. Traci Reilly was sympathetic, but wanted to do "what's in the best interest of the city." She's concerned about limited funds and ongoing maintenance needs for the park.

Longtime council member Don Tatzin was involved in the original effort to form the Community Park, back in the '80s. He also was worried about the growing operating costs, the public's negative perception and environmental impacts.

Mayor Mike Anderson referenced feedback from the public, "Clearly the neighbors don't support it." He offered an olive branch to supporters, suggesting that another location, coupled with some funding from Moraga and Orinda, might be found to "fill this unmet need."

A Note about the Lafayette Bike Park

Submitted by City Manager Steven Falk

After more than three hours of public testimony, the Lafayette City Council took action last Monday, June 10th, to remove the proposed bike park from the City's capital improvement plan (see Cathy Tyson's article for details). The bike facility for the Lafayette Community Park is thus no longer under consideration and it will not be built.

Meanwhile, last month, in the City's ongoing effort to inform the public of the status of the proposal, staff wrote an article for the Spring issue of the Lafayette Vistas quarterly newsletter that is delivered to all households.

Unfortunately, due to delays by the printer and postal service, the newsletter was not delivered in advance of the Council meeting; indeed, despite the fact that we handed off finished copy to the printer on May 24, the Vistas has not yet (at the Lamorinda Weekly deadline) arrived in local mailboxes. There will likely be some confusion when it finally does arrive because the newsletter includes an article entitled "Lafayette Bike Park on the Ropes" which suggests that the matter is still under consideration and encourages public participation. To be clear, the proposal for a bike park in Lafayette Community Park is not on the ropes, and it is no longer under consideration; it is dead. This is one of the hazards of using old school newsletters to inform the public, and we apologize for any misunderstanding that it may cause. Questions about this matter should be referred directly to City Manager Steven Falk at sfalk@lovelafayette.org or (925) 284-1968.

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[back](#)

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