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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Orinda Officials have expressed their love of Orinda as it is. So I ask, why are they promoting extensive high-density development and change - from the Irwin Senior Center, to Orinda Grove, J&J Ranch, Lavenida Subdivision Phairs and the rezoning for condos at Santa Maria? Loading Orinda with apartment buildings transforms and degrades the City in countless ways. Respectfully, there seems to be an empire-building mentality at work.

Alas, I just got wind of plans for more condo development around the Phairs property.

Like many Orindans, I am profoundly concerned that such multi-unit condo ventures are being approved without proper diligence of analyzing impending traffic pileups. Maddening car congestion cannot be stopped after development is approved, especially where no room exists to add streets. Many of us already sit in traffic shuttling to and from Wagner Ranch School.

Hundreds more are enduring the same jam of cars along our educational corridor, Moraga Way. Even before this development at Phairs goes into effect, Orinda will be adding over 1,850 new residents over the next nine years from current construction that is underway. Meanwhile, parking is already maxed out at Orinda's Community Center, around Theater Square, at the BART parking lot in the morning and to OIS and Miramonte.

This building boom is systematically eroding our quality of life and ruining our ease of travel, yet you promised to maintain Orinda's semi-rural character. We would like to see a meaningful, comprehensive traffic impact study that doesn't just account for traffic impact of one building project, but the combined effect of all construction - anything short of that is deceptive. Please, we also want to know how you are addressing maxed-out parking at the Community Center and Theater Square.

If you are increasing the city's population by 12-14% in a decade, there must be consideration I am unaware of for thousands of more cars moving along the eroding streets of our tiny community.

Thank you,
Alvin Ziegler
Orinda

Editor:

Congratulations Moraga for understanding and voting for Measure B, and thank you for all the work folks did to get it passed. Supporting our schools so all our kids have the greatest opportunity to get a balanced education, one that includes music, library access, the latest in technology opportunities, clean campuses, scholastics and so much more is key to a successful life. I was educated in the fifties. I went to public schools from grammar school through college. Without that public support, I would not have had the opportunities for the life I have today. The next time we are asked for supplemental money for our schools, be sure to look for substantiated facts of where that supplemental money goes and how much money we actually get from the State. Be mindful of how the State money keeps getting less and less and what has been cut because of it and what will be cut in the future. Everyone who owns a home in Moraga needs to remember that our schools are the number one reason people move to Moraga and keep our home prices where they are. You can verify this fact by talking to any of the many realtors who sell homes in Moraga. Thank you again for the 68.2% yes vote on Measure B. May our schools continue to provide a good and balanced education for all our kids.

Edy Schwartz
Moraga

Editor:

As we are so rapidly approaching the season and the spirit of Thanksgiving, I thought it an appropriate time to acknowledge a very special group of volunteers in Moraga. I mention my two favorite groups of volunteers, those who sponsor and plan for the tremendously popular Summer Thursday concerts, the Park and Recreation Foundation, as well as the Hacienda Foundation volunteers who are dedicated to preserving and beautifying the Hacienda. These two groups, many volunteers, I suspect, serve on both projects, are certainly deserving of all our appreciation and gratitude for making Moraga such a very special place in which to live. I do think these volunteers are like unsung warriors who don't often receive the appreciation that their dedication deserves. I hope this letter of appreciation will be acknowledged by many grateful people who enjoy the fruits of their many labors.

Joan Bruzzone
Lafayette

Editor:

We are writing to thank the Measure B Campaign Committee members, its volunteers, and the Moraga voters for coming together to pass Measure B, the Moraga Elementary School District parcel tax measure. The education of children has long been a defining community value in Moraga. Multiple years of State funding cuts was eroding the

quality education that we expect in our schools. The passage of Measure B protects our schools by providing funding to preserve core academic programs in math, science and technology; manageable class sizes; art and music programs; safe and well-maintained schools; school libraries; up-to-date technology; and the ability to attract and retain the most qualified teachers. We are extremely fortunate to live in a community that is willing to make a financial sacrifice to maintain our outstanding schools.

We are also fortunate to have so many people throughout the community volunteer so much time and talent to the campaign, whether or not they have children attending Moraga schools. Thank you to everyone who walked the neighborhoods, called the voters, wrote the letters, scanned the call sheets, took the photos, kept the books, signed the ballot argument, endorsed the measure, put up yard signs, wore buttons, painted their cars, brought goodies for volunteers, donated to the campaign, and most of all, cast their votes for the children of Moraga.

Sincerely,

Nancy Kendzierski and Kathy Ranstrom
Moraga

Editor:

Recently, the Orinda City Council overturned the Planning Commission on an application by a Montessori School to build on the old Phairs property downtown (which has been vacant for 12 years). As part of this process, facts came to light that clearly shows an example of a lack of transparency that shocks the essence of equity and good governance. I point to emails sent by Councilwoman Severson which were produced as part of a freedom of information request.

Ms. Severson and Bruce Barrows (according to the City of Orinda website representing developers as a member of the Planning Process Review Task Force) communicated about the Montessori project and agreed that the project should not be approved. As acknowledged by Ms. Severson herself, she then communicated with the head of the Planning Commission on the project and discussed how to defeat the application at the Planning Commission. She then stated that she felt those who disagree with her on development issues are "uninformed."

The City Council appoints the Planning Commissioners and has in essence appellate authority over their decisions. As an appointing and appellate authority over the Planning Commission, it is in my opinion inappropriate and unethical for a sitting City Council person to influence them on a project that will be or is pending before them (especially on a project that was most certainly going to be appealed).

We need to upgrade our downtown and this will involve bringing together many diverse opinions and perspectives.

The process needs a high level of trust, open-mindedness, compromise, and transparency. Ms. Severson's continued tenure will only enhance the mistrust and belief by many that the process is stacked in one direction. She has done tremendous good for Orinda and my daughters enjoy the part of the library that she has generously contributed to. Like she did in recusing herself on the Montessori project appeal, I would encourage her to resign as soon as possible so the air of distrust in Orinda can begin to dissipate.

Ed Jajeh
Orinda

Editor:

Thank you to Orinda's Amy Worth for her tireless work for years to make the fourth bore of the Caldecott an impressive reality. She has helped improve the daily lives of thousands of drivers in Contra Costa and Alameda County.

Carol Penskar
Orinda

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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