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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Thanks for your article on our dry year; I can't believe that photo - green vs. brown. Wanted to follow up to let you know that our Board of Directors COULD request water rationing, not WOULD. They will be making decisions as the season progresses, and we'll know more in April and May as to the possibility of rationing and/or other measures. Is it possible to issue a correction? Either way - I just wanted to be sure you were aware, in case you cover this issue later in the spring,

Andrea Pook
East Bay Municipal Utility District

Editor:

The Emergency Service Task Force recently released a 2013 update to their 2012 report on MOFD service and finances which they posted on their web site www.OrindaTaskForce.org. A portion of the update reported on the funding of MOFD and in their cover letter to the Orinda Council, also on their web site, they focused on that element. It appears that Orinda taxpayers are paying 60% more per firefighter than Moraga taxpayers and 20% more than what the firefighters cost MOFD. This results in Orinda taxpayers paying \$2 million per year more than they should for the service they are receiving. Not only is this money which could be used in Orinda to improve service shortfalls which currently exist, it is money which MOFD could collect from Moraga taxpayers via the parcel tax they voted for 20 years ago to cover these expenses but have never been asked to pay. Everyone knows that MOFD does not have the money to reduce anyone's taxes, but they do have the means for leveling the playing field. When the Orinda Council asked the voters to form MOFD in 1997, they promised the voters that they would pay only their fair share for the services provided; no more, no less. While the current Council cannot unilaterally make good on this promise, the MOFD Board can. And the Orinda Council should ask them to do so. No one wants to pay more taxes than they have to, but if Moraga deems it necessary to be serviced by the eight firefighters they currently have serving them, and those firefighters cost about \$1.1 million in taxes per position as they do, then Moraga taxpayers should be prepared to pay about \$8.8 million per year for the service. Instead, they are currently paying only \$6.7 million. While this \$300 per household increase would not be greeted with open arms, neither would the extra dollar per day expense put any great financial stress on Moraga's homeowners. Orinda, MOFD, and Moraga need to come to terms with this issue. It has been with us for 17 years, it is not going away, and it is negatively impacting the safety of Orinda's residents.

Keith Jacobsen
Orinda

Editor:

The writer of a letter published on January 15 had an issue with receiving a traffic ticket for failing to stop at a stop sign. He states that he received it for making "a rolling right turn at the corner of Reliez (sic) Station Rd and Olympic Blvd." He maintains that "at that intersection, there is no left turn, there is a right turn lane, and there are no pedestrians or cross traffic."

I am relieved that Mr. Cummins got the reminder that a "rolling right" is not a "stop" in the form of a ticket rather than by causing an injury collision with another roadway user whom he didn't see because he assumed no one would be there.

The heavily used Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail (http://www.ebparks.org/parks/trails/lafayette_moraga) intersects Olympic from the west at that intersection, to the left of drivers approaching Olympic on Reliez Station Road, and across from drivers turning left onto Reliez from Olympic. Cyclists heading east from the trail cross the south side of the intersection to continue in the eastbound bike lane on Olympic. Crossing Reliez from the parking lot on the north side of the intersection, pedestrians, including parents with babies in strollers and toddlers on trikes, Stanley Middle School children going to and from school, and retired people, access the trail.

My bike route to work and to volunteer at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden includes this trail. I follow traffic laws, including stopping at stop signs, and notice that most drivers in Lamorinda do as well. But I had several close calls at this intersection, when after stopping and waiting my turn, I entered the intersection thinking that an approaching driver had seen me and was slowing to stop at the sign. When the driver failed to stop at the sign, I had to brake hard to avoid a collision. Now I don't enter the intersection until I have made eye contact with the drivers at the other three stop signs. Occasionally I have to wait for a driver who fails to stop at the sign.

Police officers are necessary to educate people who fail to follow laws meant to protect public safety. Often, officers increase enforcement at problem intersections where there have been injury collisions or

complaints about unsafe conditions. Enforcement of traffic laws helps to prevent injuries and save lives, by reminding drivers of the importance of driving safely and complying with traffic laws. If you weren't looking and didn't notice the police, would you see a schoolchild or bicyclist at the intersection? Good driving habits include always stopping at stop signs and looking both ways, even when no police officer is there writing tickets.

I am grateful that the majority of Lamorinda drivers are attentive and considerate of bicyclists, pedestrians, and other roadway users, and grateful that police officers enforce the laws for those who need a reminder to drive safely. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Susan Agnew
Lafayette

Editor:

David Cummins received a traffic ticket for making a rolling right turn at the corner of (it happened to be) Reliez Station Rd and Olympic Blvd. ... there is no left turn, only a right turn lane, and there are no pedestrians or cross traffic - like hundreds of other stop signs.

I would like to concur that it would be more reasonable to make that turn a yield, just as hundreds of others should be yield - not stop .

Moreover, 50% of all the other stop signs should be yield and 25% more should be neither yield nor stop. I would be happy to inspect every stop sign in Lamorinda to determine if the sign is a hyper-extension of law enforcement or fulfills a real function.

It's time for requiring some personal responsibility on our roads .

PS: Both David and I have been driving for more than fifty years. We are both experts.

Wayne Phillips
Orinda

Editor:

In response to Mr. David Cummins:

As many years a Lafayette Circulation Commissioner, your January 15 letter interested me. You noted shortages of funds for PD services and inconvenience to drivers who don't stop at Lafayette's All-Way STOP at Reliez Station Road, northbound at Olympic Boulevard.

You may not have noticed but the free right turn you describe southbound from Pleasant Hill Road onto Olympic southbound provides a marked pedestrian crosswalk and vehicles must-and do -- yield to those pedestrians. Lafayette for many years had a YIELD stencil at that Reliez/Olympic intersection. We removed the YIELD in favor of the All Way STOP because pedestrians do cross there and the YIELD did nothing to deter hurrying drivers from nearly rolling over the feet of the children en route to school. The children - and trail-bound hikers - reach the bottom of the hill and cross to the trail right where you received your ticket for cruising through without stopping.

When it was a new mousetrap, we tested for a state research team the efficacy of the in-pavement flashers one often sees now at mid-street and intersection crossings. The chief finding of the research team here, as compared to drivers in the cities of the rest of the state where the team had visited, was that those who drove in or through Lafayette exhibited an attitude unique in the state: a peculiarly cavalier attitude toward the safety of pedestrians.

Lafayette residents are dedicated to our Lafayette PD and the safety of our pedestrians, our drivers, our bicyclists -- and that of our visitors. We are particularly protective of our children. It has long been so. We consider ticketing money well spent, not squandered. Our Lafayette PD saves lives, prevents catastrophes, and dedicates themselves to our community. We appreciate them for their extraordinary dedication. Rather than luxuries our PD are absolute necessities: they allow our lives to be lived safely. Lafayette residents welcome visitors. But we ask that you do your part when you come: that you show courtesy to those around you, and that you obey our traffic signals, our signs, our laws. For that, we will thank you.

Lynn Hiden
Lafayette

Editor:

It is difficult to take seriously Governor Brown's call for water conservation so long as he refuses to take seriously perpetual growth in the number of California water users.

It takes twice as much water, food, and energy to support two million people as it does one million people. Of course, the governor and his fellow travelers . . . er . . . fellow supporters at Sierra Club and Zero Population Growth d/b/a Population Connection will tell us, "If Americans ate less meat and lost more weight, perhaps by riding bikes to work, it wouldn't take twice as much water, food and energy to support two million people." Unfortunately, it takes twice as much water, food, and energy to support two million skinny vegetarians riding bicycles from work to their homes--landscaped with artificial lawns made of recycled Christmas trees--than it does one million skinny vegetarians . . .

Sorry, Governor, we know you just need something to talk about to help voters forget the problem is too many people, not too little water.

Edward C. Hartman

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