



Letters to the Editor



Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com;

Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

The Lamorinda and Walnut Creek communities have long placed a high value on quality public schools. Their support of the high school district and partner K-8 districts within the communities – Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda and Walnut Creek - has resulted in some of the top performing public schools in the State and nationwide. It is the support of parents and the local community in the form of parcel taxes, contributions to education foundations, and parent group support that enables the schools to offer rich academic programs and support services.

Without this local support, core academic programs in math, science and technology; elective programs, including the visual and performing arts; reasonable class sizes; and support services so that all students have an opportunity to succeed, would not be a reality in our schools. With this local support, our districts have been able to maintain their financial health through the severe challenges of the past six years, including unprecedented reductions in the per-student funding provided by the State.

Specifically, the Lafayette School District and Acalanes Union High School District currently have parcel taxes that annually generate \$4.6 million and \$3.9 million, respectively. Without renewal, these local taxes will expire in 2015. Expiration of the parcel taxes would result in reductions in academic programs and support services. Our schools would appear very different and the quality of opportunities for students would diminish significantly.

Each of these two local governing boards has placed a no-increase parcel tax renewal on the May 6, 2014 Mail Ballot Only Election. Measure A would renew the \$112 per parcel tax in the Acalanes Union High School District. Measure B would renew two expiring parcel taxes in the Lafayette School District for a total of \$539 per parcel.

California State finance has been slowly recovering to pre-recession levels. However, California went through landmark reform last year and passed a new funding formula to radically change the funding distribution going forward. This Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) creates a new funding level for our Districts, which is inadequate to provide what we have developed as our core academic programs, while other districts with higher percentages of targeted high needs students receive an increase in funding. Consequently, even as the State economy is recovering, overall State education funding coming to our two Districts will never reach the pre-recession (2007-2008) level. Thus, the governing boards of our Districts decided not to place a term on the parcel tax renewals - Measure A or Measure B. This “no sunset” feature provides our schools with stable and reliable revenue and local control and would enable our Districts to maintain the excellent education and continue to create opportunities for a new generation of students.

Rachel Zinn
Superintendent, Lafayette School District

Editor:

Measure J—the Orinda roads bond—is a vital step toward repairing our worst residential roads. We've made a good first step with the passage of the Measure L sales tax, which is yielding nearly \$1 million annually. But the total cost to fix our roads over several years far exceeds this revenue stream.

100% of the net proceeds of this \$20 million bond will stay in Orinda and are restricted to road and drainage repairs. These funds will be applied to roads and drains that will be selected in a public process with oversight by a citizens committee comprised of Orindans with engineering experience. This selection process will take all appropriate factors into account to make the most effective use of the funds.

As with all Orinda public works projects, standard project management controls such as competitive bidding, project scope and timeline at the start of each construction phase (when the many variables that affect road construction are known) will be in place.

We need to move now to fix our worst residential roads. Vote for Measure J.

Bob Burt
Orinda

Editor:

As someone who has devoted many years and considerable volunteer time trying to improve the condition of Orinda's roads, I urge all residents to vote YES ON MEASURE J, which will appear on the June ballot. Orinda's overall road condition is ranked as one of the worst in the Bay Area. Without more funds our residential roads will continue to deteriorate and future repairs will cost even more. Doing nothing is not an option.

Orinda has an established process in place to wisely use the new funds that will be generated by Measure J. Substantial progress has been made on arterials and

collectors using this process. Measure J will expand on this process to repair the worst residential roads in the city. We cannot afford to ignore the state of our residential roads any longer. We need to act now with new funding to stem the decline of our residential roads.

There are many protections included in this measure such as oversight by an independent citizens' oversight committee and an annual audit. The funds can only be used on road and drain repairs.

Delaying repairs will only increase costs as construction costs increase and further deterioration of the roads continues. We must act now. Please vote Yes on Measure J on June 3, 2014.

Dennis Fay
Orinda

Editor:

I have been a teacher in the Acalanes Union High School District for 15 years. Every day I see students benefiting from the generous support that our community provides through the existing parcel tax. As a district we have some of the best performing arts programs in Northern California. Unfortunately, I have also seen firsthand the real impact of the ongoing lack of adequate state education funding on those same students. The Arts are vital to help maintain the high level of achievement and educational standards that we hold. Without the funds provided by Measures A and B, we are looking at additional cuts, including the further reduction in valued programs, (loss of balanced curriculum) increased class sizes, (impeding the delivery of curriculum) outdated technology (preventing us from teaching 21st Century skills) and fewer teachers. These programs are essential for our students and need to be continued. Measures A and B will ensure these programs continue to be funded without increasing taxes. Please join teachers in voting Yes on A and B.

Bruce Lengacher
Acalanes High School

Editor:

As a teacher for 9 years in the Acalanes UHSD and a parent of two boys in the Lafayette USD, I have seen firsthand the support our community provides to our local schools through existing parcel taxes. When the Great Recession hit and state funding of schools was slashed, both districts were saved from having to make dramatic cuts to the quality of the educational programs offered to students thanks to local parcel taxes. Now, due to changes in the manner of how the state funds our schools, Lamorinda schools continue to require local funding. Without raising taxes, Measures A and B will allow the Acalanes and Lafayette school districts to keep valued programs, maintain low class sizes, replace outdated technology, and attract and retain the best and brightest teachers in the state. Please join parents and teachers in voting Yes on Measures A and B!

Michael Buchel
Acalanes High School

Editor:

As a thirty + year resident and a full time Real Estate Broker in Lafayette, I urge you to vote for Measures A and B which will provide funding for our top rated Lafayette Schools.

I believe one of the most important factors in families coming to Lafayette is the excellence of our public schools. Some come from out of state, but many come from other Bay Area communities. Our top rated Lafayette school district is of monumental importance in their decision to relocate here. As long as our public schools are among the best in the State, and we continue to support our bond measures, the demand for homes in this area will continue. This will continue to directly impact our property values.

Whether you have school aged children in Lafayette or not, I urge you to support these Measures.

Sincerely,

Patricia Battersby
Lafayette

Editor:

As a local Lafayette Realtor, resident, parent, and product of the Lafayette school system, it is crystal clear that the primary reason people move to our community is because of our excellent schools. Education in our school system is a gift that I am grateful for. Each week I have the opportunity to speak to people moving into the area and ask them why they are moving here. The response makes me smile as it is always for our school system. As a result, there is a direct correlation between schools and our property values. Increased demand for homes keeps our property values high!

Measures A and B on the May mail-ballot-only election will support the Acalanes Union High School District and the Lafayette School District. Measures A and B

are a smart investment, as they will not only support our schools and our youth but will also help keep our property values high.

Investing in quality local schools is one of the most cost-effective and simple ways to protect your property value and enhance the lives of children! Measures A and B, will not increase current taxes, they merely renew the existing parcel taxes that are expiring. Over time, the growth in your property values and the minds of our youth, will far exceed the cost of the measure. Please join me in voting Yes on Measures A and B by May 6th.

Thank you,

Dana Green
Lafayette

Editor:

I am exceedingly grateful and feel lucky, as well as proud, to live in Lafayette.

For more than two decades, our community has generously supported our outstanding public schools. Voters have approved local revenue measures, which absolutely make a meaningful difference. Our schools and students have also flourished because of an exceptional spirit of volunteerism and dedication to excellence in education. So many give so much, and we all benefit.

As a proud parent of two Burton Valley, Stanley and Acalanes grads -- and past president of LASF (now Lafayette Partners in Education) -- I know firsthand how important the generous support of the community is to the quality of our schools. Measures A and B continue this support without increasing taxes. No funds can be taken away by the State or used for other purposes; all funds will stay local to benefit our students. I support Measures A and B for our schools.

Love Lafayette. Love Lafayette schools. Please join me in voting yes on Measures A and B to continue Lafayette's long-standing tradition of supporting our outstanding local schools.

Sincerely,

Nancy Falk
Lafayette

Editor:

When we moved to Orinda 20 years ago it was for one reason: great schools. Coming from the East Coast, we were taken aback by the lack of sufficient state funding for public education in California.

We wanted for our daughters what we had enjoyed as students: good teachers, a challenging and engaging curriculum, and a community that supported its schools.

We researched not only test scores, but access to music, art, and foreign language classes. We checked voting records to see which communities passed tax measures in support of schools. In our case, we settled in Orinda, but it could just as easily have been any of the communities served by the Acalanes High School District.

Now, as we look forward to our youngest daughter graduating from college, I can say with certainty that we made the right choice. Twenty years ago I looked for a community that supported its schools so that my daughters would thrive. Today, I'm mailing in my ballot in support of Measure A so that future high school students will benefit from the same.

I can think of no better investment than education, and I ask that our neighbors in the Acalanes District join my family in continuing the longstanding tradition of supporting great public schools. Vote Yes on Measure A!

Sincerely,

Pat Rudebusch
Orinda

Editor:

As the grandparent of seven students who attend the Orinda and Acalanes District schools, I want them to have the high quality education that their parents received in the same schools. As a former Mayor and City Council member in Orinda as well as a former trustee of the Orinda Union School District, I know the challenges associated with managing a budget where an outside entity controls the revenue stream. California controls the purse strings for public education funding, and has not invested sufficiently in our schools for many years. To maintain local control, and protect our excellent schools, I am voting Yes on Measure A.

Sincerely,

Joyce Hawkins
Orinda