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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:

I am writing about the City Ventures (CV) development planned for scenic Moraga Way.

Even though CV violates the semi-rural nature of the town, the Moraga General Plan (MGP) and the Moraga Specific Plan (MOSP), the town keeps defending the development by referring to the MOSP. The MOSP violates and contradicts the MGP. According to real estate attorneys, the specific plan should never violate or contradict the General Plan. The General Plan has precedence over the Specific Plan. CV violates numerous clauses in both the General and Specific plans, especially the scenic corridor. Even a design review board member expressed this.

The MGPlan's Guiding Principle 2 is: "Protect and enhance the character and quality of residential neighborhoods, maintaining a predominantly single family, character in a semi-rural setting."

In one of the first proposals CV stated: "Even though this does not adhere to the semi-rural nature of the town..."

Both Plans continually state: "Protect existing residential neighborhoods." CV claims it is building in the likeness of Moraga Country Club (MCC). This is not true. There are no 3 story houses, the houses' setback are at least 35 -56', and vegetation is extensive at MCC and Moraga. CV's density is at least 3 times MCC. CV tries to deceive us by claiming their 3 story multiplex units are 2 stories with a loft (they used to say 3 stories until residents complained (it violates MGP LU1.3)). CV will block all of our views. CV front doors are located 8 -9' from the sidewalk on Country Club Drive (CCD). Children and pets love to run out of front doors... (onto CCD!). The lot's oak trees will be cut down.

There has been a continual disregard for the present residents of CCD and Moraga. Initially the town wanted all traffic to shunt onto St. Andrews Drive and CCD with no entrance or exit from Moraga Way! One of CV's plans included taking away the present cut away on CCD to match it's own entrance. The present residents would have to take 5-6 turns to get to Moraga Way and the shocking fact that a couple of houses suddenly have a cut away appear at the front of their house!

When you drive down Moraga Way and Road, do you see anything like this? No, because this violates the scenic corridor. When Moraga set the MOSP, Lafayette and Orinda threatened to sue Moraga. Moraga then claimed the developments would be for elderly or student residents. This and other plans are not intended for such residents. Orinda and Lafayette may want to pay attention. The traffic density will increase exponentially.

Moraga residents believe in smart development that will enhance Moraga. CV does not fit in Moraga. Please do not let this project be "fast tracked" like Shauna Brekke Read, planning director, admitted in a Design Review meeting. It is refreshing to observe planning commissioner, Theresa Onoda's concern that CV is not in line with the neighborhood and recognized that residents are very unhappy with this proposed development.

Margaret Gee
Moraga

Editor:

Not many years back the current owners of the Rheem & Orinda Theaters stated that the theaters would be showing indie films. Some thought this meant films like those shown at the "Dome" & a few movie theaters in Berkeley. Sad to say that did not happen.

When the "Dome" closed it appeared to be the opportunity to show those indie films. Sad to say that did not happen.

Based on the number of people who attended movies at the "Dome" one has to think that many Contra Costa residents would prefer to attend a theater in Moraga rather than travel to Berkeley.

An opportunity overlooked?

J.P. Duffy
Moraga

Elections

Editor:

I am asking you to vote for Christine Deane for the Contra Costa Board of Education, on the November ballot. Christine is just the sort of person you would like working for the local schools and our children. She was appointed as a trustee of the Contra Costa Board of Education after a rigorous application process, and was chosen over many other candidates. She has been deeply involved with the Contra Costa County public schools for the past 30 years as an educator, parent, and currently as a County Board of Education Trustee.

I have known Christine for 18 years and have taught with her in the San Ramon School District. She is very bright and articulate, an incredibly hard worker, and a problem solver. Christine has high morals, is a very kind and thoughtful person and is always willing to help out others.

You can find out more about Christine's background on her website www.cdeane.com.

Sallie Nelson
Orinda

Editor:

I encourage Lamorinda and Walnut Creek voters to return Susie Epstein and Nancy Kendzierski to the Acalanes Union High School District Governing Board. I serve with them and enthusiastically support them for re-election.

Susie brings strong financial leadership, and experience as a distinguished parent volunteer at Miramonte High School. Susie always asks the hard questions to ensure we make good decisions on behalf of the 5,000 students we serve each year.

Nancy is running as a candidate after her appointment to a vacant seat. She has led the PTA's regional legislative activity, and is an expert on the state's support of its schools. Nancy's experience helped create our first "Local Control Accountability Plan."

Our district has weathered financial storms and maintained its programs at the high level of quality and impact that our students expect. We have maintained salary and benefits for all employees. Continuity matters for our district's leadership. I hope you will join me in voting for Susie Epstein and Nancy Kendzierski for the Acalanes school board.

Sincerely,
Richard Whitmore
Lafayette

Editor:

As a current Orinda School Board member, elected in November, 2012, I know how important a job it is that we have. Some of our roles and responsibilities include: 1. Setting direction, 2. Establishing an effective and efficient structure, 3. Providing support, 4. Ensuring accountability, and 5. Providing community leadership.

I am writing to ask you to vote for Carol Brown in the Orinda School Board election, since Carol will be "the breath of fresh air" that is so greatly needed on our board. She is an independent thinker, fiscally responsible, and listens to all sides.

Carol is a highly responsible child advocate who works for CASA, (Court Appointed Special Advocates). She is the mother of 5 children, has been an active parent volunteer in our Orinda Schools, and has lived in Orinda for 22 years.

Carol Brown will fight for much needed increased transparency, accountability, and community receptivity to students, parents, teachers, and community members. We can trust Carol Brown to be strong enough to be sure the dog wags the tail.

I encourage you to join me in voting for Carol Brown for Orinda School Board, on November 4th!

Sarah Butler
Orinda

Editor:

Ballots are being mailed for the upcoming election and soon Orinda voters will determine who will fill the three open seats on the School Board. To many families and educators, this is an extremely important election — a chance to change the caustic atmosphere in the District. Parent groups have been prevented from spending funds they have raised on programs to expand educational opportunities and improve facilities. Programs have been cut despite an approximate 24% budget surplus. Our Teachers' pay has now fallen under the median for Contra Costa County. Parents of children at Wagner Ranch were repeatedly dismissed even though serious complaints over discipline and other issues were raised. Over and over, parents and educators have complained that our District's Superintendent has created an environment of dysfunction instead of one that honors collaboration and excellence. This election is our opportunity to do what we do best as voters — elect new leaders for a new direction.

As you may know, there is a 3-2 split on the Board, in which the majority of Members have consistently sanctioned the actions of the Superintendent instead of exercising independent judgment on a range of important issues. The majority vote includes the incumbent candidate Julie Rossiter. In order for families and educators to have a voice in the District, we need to upend this voting block. Both Carol Brown and Jason Kaune are not only concerned about the current Board dynamic, but are committed to creating an open, respectful and transparent environment should they be elected. Further, both candidates strike me as people with an independent spirit, and their contributions to the Board should prevent the problems we see with the current Board majority. I'm hoping you'll join me and many other concerned parents, and the Orinda Teachers Association, in electing Carol Brown and Jason Kaune to the School Board this fall.

Cimon Starr
Orinda

Editor:

My husband Neil and I moved our family to Orinda 14 years ago "for the schools". Since then, we have learned a great deal more about the teachers, the administrators, the superintendent and the way in which the OUSD school board operates.

On the plus side – Orinda has great parent participation and community funding, dedicated school site administrators and teachers, who provide high quality education in safe school sites.

This November, there are three school board seats in play. Two incumbents chose not to run – I believe in part due to the frustration concerning the way in which the district has been governed.

After almost a decade of attending OUSD Board meetings, I would strongly encourage voters to support all newcomers – Brown, Kaune and Weiner rather than the incumbent Rossiter.

Rossiter was given four years to demonstrate what she would do – during which time she also served as OUSD Board President. Rossiter was an ineffectual Board President, had a habit of not allowing public comment when warranted and most concerning, her dismissive demeanor toward anyone who came to the OUSD Board seeking solace after harsh treatment from a teacher, administrator or other was truly alarming.

Ms Brown brings a child-center focus, Mr Kaune is an ethics attorney and Ms Weiner, a relative newcomer to the community, who appears to have actively involved herself in the schools, strike me as the best team to move the district forward during challenging times.

Please consider voting for Brown, Kanue and Weiner – the candidates most likely to bringing the needed breath of fresh air to the OUSD Board.

Thank you,
Bekki Van Voorhis-Gilbert
Orinda

... Letters continued on next page