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From Front Page

Drones in Lamorinda

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"You keep hearing about" drones, said Tom Stack, a Lafayette resident and Coldwell Banker realtor. Stack said some people think of drones as a "war toy" and not as a real estate tool. He recounts his own recent experience with a drone during his college reunion in the South Bay. "This thing was floating over me. ... I'm not sure I liked that," he said. Yet Stack admits "in a few years it'll be the norm." He says drone photography gives real estate properties a certain "wow factor" – "so cool," he said.

Stack's co-worker Vlatka Bathgate purchased her own drone, a Parrot AR, online six months ago and has her husband fly it. She said her clients love having drone photos available. "The marketing of some properties really benefits from the perspective only a drone can provide," Bathgate said.

Both the Federal Aviation Administration and the Federal Communications Commission are monitoring drone use as it catches on – remote control frequencies used for the first person view (FPV) or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) fall within the amateur radio band and therefore require an FCC radio license to operate per Title 47, FCC Code of Federal Regulations Part 97.

Mark Culpepper, a local technol-

ogy executive, has worked with drones over the last several years. He said personal drones "present an instant view of the state of your assets." Ten years ago Culpepper said a drone cost \$10,000; today a drone equipped with an optical camera can be purchased for about \$1,500, and other models are available for as little as \$300.

Culpepper's drone control interface is an iOS device and a tiny lithium battery allows the unit to be controlled from a distance of 500 meters. Flight life is approximately 25 minutes. His quad copter weighs just 3 pounds, has counter-rotating engines, an accelerometer, a gyro and GPS. "I don't see [drone use] slowing down," he said.

The drones, however powerful as tools, are also quite fragile. Culpepper curtailed his flight demo at a picnic when several boys began throwing rocks at his airborne drone.

Lamorinda police and fire professionals are well aware of the pros and cons of drone use. "We [already] have good access to both infrared and real-time video technology with the East Bay Regional Parks helicopters and CAL Fire helicopters," said Moraga-Orinda Fire District Chief Stephen Healy. "I see the drone [being used] more for larger fires in remote, inac-

cessible areas," he said.

Lamorinda's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein knows several drone operators in Lamorinda; he says drones are "one heck of a tool," but he is always cautious "when it comes to life-safety issues" and expressed concerns about the possibility of unrestricted drone use in airspace over a rescue site.

"We need to know who gets the airspace and what priorities are," Rein said.

Orinda Police Chief Mark Nagel thinks using drones to locate missing adults or children would be invaluable, but admits there is always the potential for invasion of privacy. "I guess it really depends on how it's being used," he said.

"The decision to field that type of equipment for either Lafayette or Orinda would have to be approved by the Sheriff," said Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen.

Moraga's Police Chief Robert Priebe said drone use "could be an excellent tool," but added he is not up to date on its legal ramifications.

Drone technology, said Culpepper, can be "interesting, fascinating, and disruptive," but it's still possible to lose [flight] control.

"They're not toys," he said.

Drone Information on the Web

The FAA and unmanned aircraft systems:

<https://www.faa.gov/uas/>

<http://www.computerworld.com/article/2602902/pressure-builds-on-faa-to-release-drone-rules.html>

<http://www.dailytech.com/Court+Rules+that+FAA+Cannot+Ban+Commercial+Drones+Dismisses+10000+Fine+for+Drone+User/article34468.htm>

<http://diydrone.com/profiles/blogs/how-long-will-unregulated-fpv-and-rc-last>

Moraga Raises the Rent

... continued from page A1

The state would not let the town resell the land immediately, Dessayer explains. Since the town didn't have the money to pay for the property, MCC took out a 20-year loan to fund the town's purchase of the land, and paid the town only a small administrative fee – \$4,200 per year – for use of those 60 acres. Under the agreement, "after 20 years, the town could raise the rent to market rate," he says.

The term of the contract is 75 years and it gives MCC first dibs on purchasing the property if the town ever decided to sell it. "But we (the Town Council at the time) recommended that it should remain a town asset and a source of revenue in perpetuity," adds Dessayer.

Because the state wanted that land to remain somewhat open space

and in the public domain, the contract includes a few perks for Moraga residents, such as access to MCC's grounds for the annual Independence Day fireworks.

The agreement spelled out the process to re-evaluate the lease after 20 years. A group formed of town and MCC representatives met earlier in the year and on Oct. 22 the Town Council was asked to approve a new yearly rental rate. "In accordance with the land lease between the town and the country club, each party selected a qualified appraiser of their choice to determine what is the current market rate for renting this property," explained Stephanie Hom, Moraga's administrative services director. "If the difference between the two values was more than 40 percent, the two ap-

praisers had to choose a third one to propose a new rate. The council would then decide a rent no higher than any of the two appraisals closest in value to each other."

The town's appraiser suggested a yearly rent of \$135,000, while MCC's appraiser estimated it at \$53,000. The third appraiser said that \$63,250 was the market rate and the council adopted that amount.

MCC general manager Andrew Scott urged the town to moderate its requirement, to no avail. When asked if the club had raised the question of buying the property, he replied, "The question of whether to purchase the land is really a separate issue that has surfaced previously and may surface again. It is the board's issue to address if it so chooses."

Civic News Orinda

Public Comment Period Open for Orinda's Housing Element and EIR

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Alternative three could "consist of up to 108 units divided between three locations in downtown Orinda" – the aforementioned units at Orinda Community Church, plus 54 units at the Rite Aid on 27 Orinda Way and 27 units with ground floor commercial space at 1 Orinda Way. "Off-street parking would be required for all alternatives, including underground parking on the 1 and 27 Orinda Way sites."

Key sections of the draft EIR assess the potential negative impacts of such development on Orinda's schools and other public services such as fire and police (section 3.12),

city roads and regional transportation (section 3.13), utilities (section 3.14), noise (section 3.10), and air and water quality (sections 3.2 and 3.8).

After hearing Orindans' input and receiving the Orinda Planning Commission's formal recommendation, the Orinda City Council will select a site(s) to accommodate Orinda's RHNA and approve a draft Housing Element update for review by the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

To comply with deadlines of state law, HCD review of Orinda's draft Housing Element must begin

by mid-December. City leaders reiterated that the "2015-2023 Housing Element does not propose specific housing development projects." Although the city is mandated by state law to establish the rules for development of housing consistent with state law, private property owners will still continue to decide whether or not to develop their respective properties.

To learn more about the Regional Housing Needs Allocation process and Sustainable Communities Strategy, visit ABAG's website: www.abag.ca.gov/planning/housingneeds.