

Wight House Denied on Split Vote

By Cathy Tyson

On a vote of three in favor of denial, one abstention, and one in favor of approval, the controversial Wight home on a 13-acre parcel at the end of Monticello Road was officially denied. This may not be the last word, however. Attorney David Bowie may sue the city on behalf of his clients, Steven and Linda Wight.

Bowie explained that, in his opinion, there's no difference in terms of impact depending on the size of the home. The process of creating a buildable lot on this site requires infrastructure, road construction and more, which are needed regardless of house size, whether it's 3,000 square feet or 10,000. "In essence, this is nothing more than a single family residence that isn't even that large by Lafayette standards," argued Bowie.

This decision was seven years in the making. At the April 13 Lafayette City Council meeting, both an approval and a denial were prepared, just in case, depending on the decision of the five city council members. Three of the five tipped the scales to deny the project: Mayor Brandt Andersson and city council members Traci Reilly and Mark Mitchell all voted no.

Mitchell was clear, commenting, "If we can't make all the findings, we have to vote for denial. In my reading of the Ordinance, I cannot make the findings." Reilly did her homework, going point by point over specific concerns on a number of issues.

In an unusual move, Council Member Don Tatzin abstained from making a decision, explaining he was concerned about the lack of clarity and sufficiency of the construction management plan. He had concluded weeks ago that the city would be sued, regardless of what the council does.

Spelling out Phase I and Phase II requirements, the mayor pondered, "Is it too much?" The building application describes a 10,000-square-foot home on a ridge, and the findings require a small footprint. He also questioned whether the project was in the best interest of the public's health, safety and general welfare summarizing that "building large homes on ridgelines is an anathema to the city's policies and the public's sensitivity to those ridgelines. I really find it impossible to make the findings without dishonoring the plans and expectations of two generations of citizens of this city."

Lafayette's Environmental Excellence Awards Announced

The following winners of the Lafayette Awards of Environmental Excellence, more commonly known as the Lafayette Green Awards, are being recognized for their outstanding efforts that contribute to a more sustainable community and help the city achieve its environmental goals. Awards were chosen across five different categories: residents, local businesses, schools, community organizations and green building.

The 2014 winners include:

- Residents – Bart Carr, "Papa" John Kiefer and Steve Richard
- Local Businesses – Lafayette Car Wash and Metro Lafayette

- Schools – Global Student Embassy, Janet Kaidantzis and Brian Mangold
- Community Organization – Lafayette Chamber of Commerce
- Green Building – Ed and Carolyn Milovic residence

The winners will be formally announced at the Lafayette Earth Day Festival at noon Sunday, April 26 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Amphitheater. Additionally, Vice Mayor Traci Reilly will present the awards to the recipients at the city council meeting at approximately 7 p.m. Monday, April 27 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Community Hall. For more information about the Green Awards, visit www.lovelafayette.org/GreenAwards.

Bleak Outlook for Lafayette's Baseball Fields

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With the possibility of dead fields this summer, the question becomes what to do next year? There have been some preliminary discussions between the city and Lafayette Little League about installing artificial turf, but the situation is unclear at this point.

"I would really like to see gray water used," said Parks, Trails and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell about recycled water. She explained that the city would have to install a complete set of pipes to transport that water and, unfortunately, that's not an option. Having a fleet of tanker trucks driving from the Central Contra Costa Sanitary facility in Martinez to water all of the grass at baseball fields is also not a viable solution, explained Moran; however there are certain small areas downtown that are not hooked up to irrigation. Expect to see recycled water used there.

It is possible that Mother Nature delivers a cooler summer, which would help the situation, according to Russell. Even if the Bermuda grass is brown on top, the roots can remain alive. Aside from the irrigated five acres of baseball field at the Community Park, the balance of the park is planted with California native vegetation that only gets watered via clouds.

The city is trying a variety of approaches to address EBMUD's mandatory 25 percent cutbacks. Moran reports they will diligently be reading water meters to detect underground leaks, and repair

where needed. The healthy green landscaping installed just last year on Mt. Diablo Boulevard medians have hopefully become established, and the city will continue to modify irrigation to drip from spray heads to minimize over-spray.

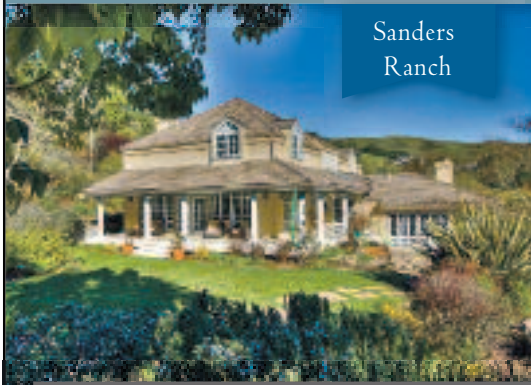
Unfortunately, from time to time, a less than observant driver careens up over a curb and into median landscaping, and in doing so, breaks a sprinkler head or pipe. "We rely on residents letting us know, so please call and report issues promptly," said Moran. He and Travers will be delivering a report to the Lafayette City Council in early May about the city's water reduction strategy.

Nelsy Rodriguez, public information officer with EBMUD, confirmed the maximum two day per week landscape limitation for municipalities, including their sports fields. The utility does offer lawn conversion help for homeowners of up to \$2,500 to remove a lawn and replace it with native, drought resistant plantings. However, that program does not extend to artificial turf.

In addition to the city-owned sports fields, schools will be facing the same dilemma, a maximum of two days per week watering. Fields throughout Lamorinda will all be affected.

See something, say something. To report a leak on city-owned property in Lafayette, call the Public Works Department at (925) 934-3908.

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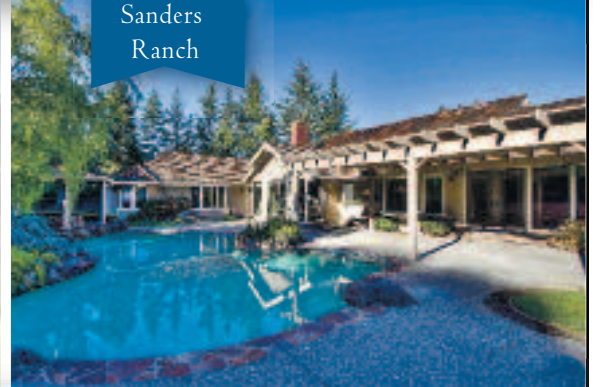


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