

Lamorinda

Tough Choices to Ease AUHSD School Crowding

By Cathy Tyson

A projected 820 new students are anticipated in the Acalanes Union High School District in 10 years time. How to accommodate all of those kids will be challenging, so the AUHSD governing board is starting to take a hard look at options to deal with the growth.

With the same space and more teenage bodies, obviously something's got to change. Although enrollment at Campolindo and Miramonte high schools are slated to gradually increase, at its recent meeting the school board focused mainly on Acalanes and Las Lomas high

schools, which are nearing maximum capacity.

Looking at enrollment happens every year, so the district can project with a reasonable amount of accuracy how many students will be attending the four main AUHSD campuses in the future. Enrollment at the Acalanes Center for Independent Study, and Transition schools is under a 100 students, so the focus is on the larger facilities.

Escalating student enrollments are projected throughout the district and are expected to climb from a total 2015 school year enrollment of 5,380

students in grades 9 through 12, gradually stepping up to an anticipated 6,200 students in 2025.

Las Lomas has the largest student population at 1,541 students, a good bit more cramped than the least crowded school, Miramonte, at 1,155 students this year.

Top of the possible solutions list was considering intra and interdistrict transfer policies. Intradistrict transfers are students who reside inside the AUHSD boundaries but wish to attend a different school within the district. Interdistrict transfers are students who reside outside the district boundaries who want to attend school in the AUHSD.

Las Lomas, almost bursting at the seams now, has been closed to interdistrict transfers due to school impaction, but there have been a few administrative placements.

For the 2015-16 school year, there are a total of 275 students anticipated to transfer from outside the district into Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte. Limiting those students coming in is one way to reduce the student population. The governing

board recognizes that there are justifiable, compelling reasons for interdistrict transfers; it deals with transfers on a case-by-case basis, and may change the current policy.

Another option is to increase room availability, which could happen in a variety of ways: install portable classrooms, new construction, or convert office space or study halls to classrooms. Each option has positives and negatives.

"We believe the limiting factor is classroom space," said Superintendent John Nickerson, adding there's "not a lot of opportunity" for that at Las Lomas; the 58 classrooms are basically entirely occupied. A tight parking situation adds to the overall congestion there. "Acalanes had some easier solutions," he explained. Rooms 105 and 106 could be converted to classrooms, and study hall space could be moved elsewhere on campus.

School board members expressed concern over portables. Leasing a standard-size 24 by 40 foot portable costs \$7,000 per year, but the set-up costs are steep—roughly \$150,000 to bring electrical service out to the

building(s), furniture, fire safety equipment, paving a pad to place the portable on, and more.

"Long-term portables don't answer the educational issue," said Board Member Kathy Coppersmith. Newcomer to the board, Bob Hockett, saw it as an east/west issue and suggested shifting students west to less crowded campuses, or finding a way to utilize the Del Valle facility.

Also on the table: offering an eight-period day, creating a block schedule for seven periods, opening a magnet school or a Las Lomas satellite school at the Del Valle campus, and finally, shifting school boundaries.

Board Member Nancy Kendzierski wondered about timing, recognizing that many of these solutions take a fair amount of time. "At what point do we hit a crisis level?" she asked.

Conversations about possible solutions will continue in the fall. More data gathering and analysis is slated to occur this summer. In the meantime, Board Member Richard Whitmore said he is aware of "a low level of parent hysteria" in the community.

Lafayette

Lafayette Traffic Signals

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Because traffic is different depending on the day and hour, four separate timing plans were developed for the average weekday, and one for a typical weekend day.

After TJKM crunched the numbers, the intersection signals were adjusted and the city took the new signal timings for a road test on a trial basis to see if they had an effect on traffic. There were noticeable improvements,

especially during uncongested time periods, so the new timing stayed.

The Program for Arterial System Synchronization (PASS) is part of a larger program throughout the Bay Area with a goal of "facilitating traffic progression" along study intersections and "maximizing operational efficiency" within existing capacity constraints.

Lafayette

Drama at Burton Valley

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The estimated cost to install energy efficient HVAC to classrooms, offices, and other spaces site-wide is estimated to cost \$765,000. Happy Valley Elementary was also brand new in 1957 and has a vintage roof, gutters and downspouts that need to be updated at an estimated cost of \$297,000.

In order to pay for this modernization, the district is looking at potential revenue sources, and is considering, if the governing board agrees, to place a bond measure on

the ballot in June or November of 2016. More study sessions and community engagement will likely be slated for the fall of 2015 to discuss the issue.

Check out the whole Capacity and Utilization Study and Facilities Needs Assessment Study, to get more detail on all of the demographics and estimated update costs at the district website (www.lafsd.k12.ca.us), then click on district, then business services, then finally facilities.

Moraga

A Community Center

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From these goals, concepts were proposed such as a tea room, a wine cave, a jazz club at the pavilion, a spa, a teen and a senior center, an edible garden, an art garden, a boutique hotel, a restaurant and catering business for the weddings and receptions, and more. As they exited, participants were asked to put a blue dot on concepts they supported and

eventually to add a red dot on the ones they greatly opposed. The concepts of a boutique hotel or small bed and breakfast got almost as many dislikes as it got likes.

Over the next four months, residents will have additional opportunities for input as the concept for the Hacienda is refined.

Moraga

A Short Reprieve For the Rheem Theatre

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While the foundation could help other organizations, the immediate focus would be the preservation of the theater.

Other citizens presented ideas to the council, including two students from Saint Mary's who proposed working with the college so students could use their flex dollars at the concession stand. Resident Richard Harris reminded those in attendance that the first way to support the theater was to go there. "When we go to the movies in Walnut Creek instead of Moraga or Orinda, we are hurting ourselves," he said.

Former councilmember Dale Walwark somewhat dampened the evening's euphoric mood when he noted that the theater had from day one been a money-loser and that all he was hearing were good intentions, but no real solutions. Councilmember Dave Trotter asked him to wait and see.

Kathe Nelson, executive director of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, along with many other residents, expressed her support, noting the theater brings life, energy and people into town for movies and special events and supports surrounding businesses.

"We all want the same thing, to keep the theater open and active,"

Keimach said. "It takes a community to get to a crisis and it takes a community to get us out of one. I'm stressing we all need to work together as a community to find a solution."

Keimach expects to present a plan to the council in mid-October.

Community Donates to "Save the Rheem Theatre" GoFundMe Site

Former Moraga resident Pamela Dunn set up a GoFundMe site with a goal to raise \$5,000 in two weeks to offset the rent increase at the New Rheem Theatre until a nonprofit foundation within the Moraga community was operational. As of Monday, June 15, the goal was already surpassed by \$491. "We started the fund Thursday and by Saturday we reached our goal," Dunn said. An anonymous \$2,000 donation put it over the top. "The community really stepped up," she said. Two boys, ages 9 and 11, gave \$100 and said, "We don't want our theater to close." For updated information about the community effort, visit <http://www.gofundme.com/wt689k>.

Orinda

Cohesive New Look for Orinda

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After reviewing a map suggesting sign locations throughout Orinda, Orr asked Cuyler to ensure new signs didn't conflict with other recently installed signage, such as the one recently installed near Safeway on Camino Sobrante.

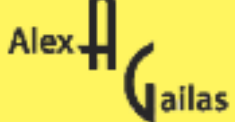


Council Member Eve Phillips wanted to look at balance and be sure the placement wasn't as cluttered as it looked on the map provided them. Cuyler said as the project moves forward the firm will review the loca-

tions again, and it plans to do mock-ups and place prototypes around town, so people have an idea of the design as well as placement. Some of the signage will also include historical elements such as photos and information about Orinda's past.

"Sign posts on wood stanchions would give directional information on two sides, and on the third side we'd work with the Historical Society to bring out the imagery and history of Orinda," Cuyler said.

Vice Mayor Victoria Smith asked that Square Peg Design also meet with the Historical Landmarks Committee as well when developing this idea. "Signs with the photos may be a great Eagle Scout project," she added.

The council approved the conceptual design, and the firm is now moving forward with a final design. Construction is expected in late 2015 or early 2016. For more information about the project, visit the City of Orinda website at cityoforinda.org.

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Come join us for an Informative Meeting

about the Start of the

Moraga Community Foundation

Tuesday June 23rd, 7 PM

Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School Street

A new Moraga Community Foundation will be started to help us enhance, develop and maintain our community life. The foundation will help raise funds to support a broad range of existing and new projects such as saving the Rheem Theatre.

Speakers:

Ann Grodin,	<i>Founder and longtime president of the Lafayette Community Foundation</i>
Mark Robert,	<i>Board member of the Orinda Community Foundation</i>
Andy Scheck,	<i>Initiator of the Moraga Community Foundation</i>

Please join us and learn about the needs and means of a community foundation and become part of it from day one.

For question, please email andy@moragacommunityfoundation.org or call 925-330-7916