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Letters to the Editor

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. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Voters Shouldn't Approve L Without More Discussion

Dear Editor,

Orinda's bad roads need to be fixed, but they need to be fixed properly.

In June 2014, Orinda's voters approved a \$20 million bond for road repair. As of late March 2016, only \$2.5 million of the \$20 million were spent.

Now, Orinda's voters are being asked to approve a \$25 million road-repair bond — Measure L — at the June 2016 election. The measure needs a two-thirds vote to pass. Voters should be given a chance to see how well the \$20 million from 2014 are spent before approving any more money. Holding off additional spending in June 2016 is wise because in November 2016 there will be, on the fall ballot, a large number of competing, tax-raising measures.

The Orinda City Council has refused to hold town-hall meetings (or press conferences) on Measure L of 2016. When so much of Orinda's future — in terms of roads and money — is at stake, the city council should make a special effort to meet with and educate voters. However, the city council, with the notable exception of council member Eve Phillips, refuses to meet with Orinda's taxpayers. Why is the majority of the city council unwilling to have an open and public town-hall meeting about an expensive, \$25 million road bond?

For the 2014 bond measure of \$20 million, Orinda did not appoint a special project manager. Orindans must be assured that if Measure L of 2016 passes, a qualified and experienced project manager will be appointed. There is no guarantee that, with the passage of Measure L, such a manager will be appointed.

I urge Orindans to vote NO on Measure L. Voters must have a sensible plan for road repair before providing Orinda's government with more money!

Richard S. Colman
Chairman, Orindans for Better Roads
Orinda

Measure L Will Not Do the Job

Dear Editor,

On the June ballot, the Orinda City Council will ask the voters to approve a \$25 million property tax increase to repair Orinda's roads. This is the third time the city has come to us for money for this project and it will not be the last. The total cost of repairing all of Orinda's roads will be roughly \$80 million. To date the city has raised only \$35 million, and even if Measure L passes, the city will be still be \$20 million

short. The city council is kicking the can down the road hoping they can to come back to the voters again when the city runs out of money. This approach presents a big risk to the 20 percent of families whose homes will remain on poor roads.

How can they be sure that the 80 percent of lucky voters whose roads are fixed will vote for yet another tax increase?

At a city council meeting in January, State Senator Steve Glazer made an appearance to urge the council to go for the \$25 million rather than be up front about the true cost. Why would he do that? People who follow city politics think Mr. Glazer is afraid that a \$45 million measure for Orinda would reduce the voters' appetite for another tax measure that he is supporting on the same ballot. Furthermore, admitting that the city has been fooling the voters about the true cost of fixing their roads reflects badly on the job he and the council did while he was the city's mayor.

Don't take the risk that your road will not be fixed. Vote NO on Measure L and send a clear message to the city council to come back in November with a comprehensive tax measure that repairs all our roads and provides funds for their long-term maintenance.

For more information go to: www.orindaroadfacts.info.

Roger Squier
Orinda

Vote Yes on L

Dear Editor,

We moved to St. Stephens Drive nine years ago and appreciate living in this beautiful community. However, in the time we have been here many of Orinda's roads have deteriorated badly. We are grateful that our road has been repaired, but we know that the current funds will not stretch far enough to fix all the roads that need it.

Other Orinda residents are desperately waiting for their roads to be repaired as well. Our roads are the foundation of our city, and all of us who live here share the responsibility of keeping them in good shape.

Measure L is necessary in order to continue the progress we have made repairing our roads. We know that Orinda cannot fix all the roads that need repair without additional funds. If we don't finish fixing the roads in Orinda now, the delays will lead to much bigger issues and more costly repairs in the future. Measure L continues the work to restore Orinda roads to a good safe condition. We all need to take responsibility for making sure the roads are repaired. I urge you to VOTE YES ON MEASURE L!

Jay Solmonson & Le Tran-Thi
Orinda

PG&E Says Thank You

Dear Editor,

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) Company would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the community for its support during the recent gas outage caused by the sinkhole in Moraga. Mother Nature can often create significant weather-related challenges, including gas and electric outages, and we know how tough this can be on families and businesses. In these situations, a coordinated response is key to safely and quickly restoring service to the communities we serve. I personally was in Moraga and saw firsthand the hard work and collaboration between the town and first responders, including the fire department.

As soon as we learned that a stop light severed our gas line, our crews immediately went to the scene and worked through the night to restore gas service to the 2,500 customers who were without service. I stayed with our team through the night to ensure that we were prioritizing the safety of our community and effectively coordinating our work.

When gas service is lost, it takes two visits to every residence and business. During the first visit, we gain access to the meter and shut off the gas. Once we have resolved the issue, we then revisit each customer to safely restore service by turning the gas on at the meter and relighting pilot lights. When restoring service during an unplanned and immediate response, customers may not be home or available, delaying completion of the restoration process.

During the outage, I met with some of the local leaders and residents who welcomed more than 200 PG&E employees from Northern and Central California to assist in our restoration and customer outreach efforts. We received very positive feedback from Moraga officials and members of the community, and I would personally like to thank you again for your ongoing support. You can be confident that in an emergency situation, we will be there to support our communities. For us, our customers are also our family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues, too and we are proud to serve our community.

John Higgins,
Vice President of Gas Transmission and Distribution Operations
Danville

Public Forum

Join our Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to letters@lamorindaweekly.com and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum.

Preserve Leigh Creekside Park

By MaryJo and Glen Cass

We lived next to Leigh Creekside Park (LCP) in Lafayette in the 1990s and participated in the grassroots effort to create the park. It's a fascinating story, and an important one, given the fact that the park's rustic, open-space ambiance is currently targeted for development.

Defined in City plans as a "passive neighborhood" park, Leigh Creekside Park is located at Moraga Boulevard and Fourth Street, next to Las Trampas Creek, a few steps from the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail. It's less than one acre, with an open-space ambiance and an inviting wildlife riparian corridor.

The park is named after John and Ethel Leigh, former owners of the property and early Lafayette residents. Developers often knocked on their door over the years, offering to purchase their land. Their answer was always no; they preferred to keep development at bay. After John passed away in August 1998, a developer again tried to purchase the parcels that comprise today's park, to build five homes.

Concerned about development and remembering John and Ethel's wish that their property would one day become a park, neighbors got busy. Lisa and Tom Christophe spearheaded a grassroots neighborhood campaign to honor the Leighs' wish. We joined them in this effort, knocking on doors, asking residents if they would like a park, and make a donation. They said yes to both, but wanted to preserve the property as an undeveloped open space that would not invite noise, vandalism and traffic.

In a recent conversation, Lisa Christophe described our objective at the time. "Donors were told that the property would be preserved in its natural state with no development whatsoever. This was the whole point of the purchase." In a December 22, 1998 letter, she wrote, "John Leigh relished the property's preservation as an open space. Neighbors have been very supportive of acquisition of the

property and its preservation in its natural state. Over 150 people signed a preservation petition."

In a December 18, 1998 letter to the East Bay Regional Parks Land Acquisition Department, Lafayette's Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell wrote, "an overwhelming majority would like the land preserved in as natural a state as possible."

A Dec. 19, 1998 article in The Contra Costa Times reported, "A groundswell of neighborhood support and financial pledges for saving the flat site at Fourth Street and Moraga Boulevard and its towering oak tree has helped persuade the [City] to move toward buying it." Residents and grade-school students wrote to state representatives requesting park grants; real estate agents offered 10 percent of their commission.

Neighbors contributed over \$33,000 to help City leaders secure a \$375,000 state grant. In a report to Lafayette's City Council, Russell explained, "State funds plus the donations provided enough money to purchase and develop the property as a passive neighborhood park. The City took title on October 21, 1999."

In many ways, this park was a gift to the city from residents who contributed and campaigned for state funds. They did not sign a legal document to preserve this quiet, passive park, but their intentions were clear. They entrusted the City of Lafayette with this legacy and expected them to honor the park's history and preserve it as a natural, open-space park for future generations.

That history and those expectations are at risk. A so-called LCP Improvement Plan is working its way through City departments with a design concept that would completely transform the quiet natural character of the park into a developed park with added pavement, elaborate play structures and rubberized fall-zone material covering roots and soil. Trees would be cut down and roots compromised with possible impacts on the riparian area and wildlife. Traffic, parking and noise could impact this quiet single-

family residential neighborhood.

The plan is also expensive. At the March 14 city council meeting, gasps of shock filled the room when a \$1 million budget was presented. The council cut in half the budget, but it still surpasses the original combined cost of land purchase and park creation.

In recent months, council members have received over 100 letters asking them to stop the Improvement Plan. Many also attended the meeting and spoke against the project.

Playground parks are great, but not here; two are within walking distance. LCP offers a unique alternative for children, a chance to explore and engage in nature, listen for birds, identify trees and use their imagination in unstructured play. Parents across the country are on waiting lists for outdoor pre-schools costing \$700 a month for an environment that LCP provides for free. Experts claim that today's children have lost touch with nature; they call it a "nature deficit disorder."

Therefore, we residents are offering an alternative to the Improvement Plan. We are offering to hire a professional landscape designer, at our expense, to present a conceptual design of a nature-based playscape for children that include ADA improvements. We want to preserve LCP's natural beauty and at the same time, open new doors for children, to explore and engage with nature.

Last year's Community Conversation survey described Lafayette as "a quiet oasis of civility amidst a turbulent sea of urbanity." If that's true, why then are we about to destroy our oasis in Leigh Creekside Park? Please urge the council to preserve the original wishes of John and Ethel and retain the natural ambiance of the park. Email cityhall@lovelafayette.org.

Lafayette residents MaryJo and Glen Cass are original founders and donors to the park. They lived on Fourth St. when the park was founded in 1999.