

Letters to the Editor

Spirit Van Says Thank You

Dear Editor,

To the members of the Moraga Town Council, Town Manager Priebe, and the Moraga community,

Each year, we ask Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda to financially support the Lamorinda Spirit Van Program. This has been a very difficult year for the Town of Moraga to consider funding us as it is focused on financing the repairs to the sinkhole.

I would like to thank Moraga Vice Mayor Dave Trotter for writing a letter of support for the Spirit Van. Because of Mr. Trotter's letter, a donor who wishes to remain anonymous is matching donations up to \$4,500 to help the Town of Moraga provide \$9,000 in funding to the Lamorinda Spirit Van Program. In response to these efforts donations are coming in, and another donor who also wishes to remain anonymous has said s/he will make up any shortage. These efforts ensure that Moraga's usual contribution of \$9,000 will continue for 2016-2017. Since the Moraga Town Council has agreed to revisit the possibility of funding the Lamorinda Spirit Van Program in January after more is known about funding the sinkhole repairs, Moraga's contribution from the town and from private donations may turn out to be more than \$9,000. For this financial support, the City of Lafayette, the passengers, and I are very appreciative.

A big "Thank you," to vice mayor Trotter, the Moraga Town Council, and Moraga community donors for making this happen! Thank you to John Warshaw for setting up the Active.Netdonations site via facebook.com/lamorindaspiritvan! Thank you to Jay Ingram and Kimberly Nelson for setting up the Electronic Reader Board!

Mary Bruns
Lamorinda Spirit Van Program
Lafayette

Lafayette Measure C

Dear Editor,

We strongly urge our fellow Lafayette citizens to vote Yes on Measure C.

All funds raised by the Measure and associated expenditures will be tracked and reviewed by an independent Citizen Oversight Committee. This committee will be an effective check on how these specific dollars are spent.

In addition, our city council has bi-weekly meetings where all citizens are encouraged to speak on any and all matters, including thoughts and ideas pertaining to Measure C funds.

Remember all Measure C monies will be placed in a separate category account so that the oversight committee and all Lafayette residents can see, report and comment on Measure C expenditures.

Protecting open space, reducing downtown congestion — including parking — enhancing police protection and potentially acquiring land for a downtown park are some of the elements Measure C is intended to address.

Please join us to make Lafayette, the town we all love, a better place to live.

Vote Yes on Measure C.
Karen and Tom Mulvaney
Lafayette

Lafayette Doesn't Need More Taxes

Dear Editor,

I am writing concerning your Oct. 5 Measure C article.

While Prop C is billed as a one percent increase in the sales tax, the increase from 8.5 percent to 9.5 percent is an approximately 12 percent increase. Add to this a potential 1/2 percent increase from Measure X, bringing the total to 10 percent, this sales tax increase could be nearly 18 percent. And to top it off is a measure to continue the 1/4-percent increase that Governor Brown promised would expire.

Were it not for these measures the tax rate should have dropped to 8.25 percent. So this potential rate of 10 percent we're looking at is in actuality a 21 percent increase, when in-

flation is under 2 percent. And this comes at a time where homeowners are seeing regular annual increase in their property taxes, increases in other county fees and taxes, and when the city is not only reaping the rewards of these continued increases but is showing a significant surplus each year. Many articles have told the story of how the cost of living in the Bay Area is climbing out of control. Yet, one of the key areas in cost of living are all these numerous tax increases and fees that are popping up everywhere, and on top of these, there are BART increases, toll increases, utility increases ... the list is endless. I recently went to book a small airfare and the tax was more than 50 percent of the fare.

Every time a homeowner goes to the hardware store, a parent picks up a hot meal on the way home, this is taking out another bite.

Lafayette should be giving the stretched middle class homeowners a tax break when it has a surplus, not an increase.

Ty Allison
Lafayette

I Voted Yes on C

Dear Editor,

I voted yes for Measure C because I trust the judgment of those supporting it and the members of the city council who unanimously concluded, after extensive hearings, adding 1 percent to the sales taxes is in our interest. Adding to our tax burden is not something they would recommend if they didn't think it was important. The knee-jerk reaction of most constituents is to oppose all tax increases. In fact 28 percent of voters vote no on every proposal that increases their taxes.

I'm not tied to the priorities listed by the council. They are today's priorities established by a survey taken that most of us, including me, didn't take the time to complete.

I wouldn't mind if someone is able to persuade the council to spend money on something that is not on the list. I trust in local government and our ability to influence decisions that are made. If the 1 percent went to Washington D.C. or Sacramento I'd be voting no.

I do believe there is a correlation between what we invest in the city and schools and the value of our homes. I can't possibly justify refusing to pay an extra 1 percent on the taxable items I purchase in Lafayette given how much my home has appreciated. I appreciate the stewardship provided by members of the city council, all of whom volunteered their time. Bottom line, I'm a happy camper.

Finally, I don't think we should take the risk that other taxing authorities will make it impossible for the city to add 1 percent later. The sales tax in Lafayette is already 8.5 percent and the maximum allowed by state law is 10 percent. I think it will reach the maximum even if Lafayette doesn't add anything to the sales tax burden.

If you can't afford it certainly vote no on C. But, if you can and still decide to vote no then at least be civil. It is important that we be respectful of opposing views. This much we know from observing the presidential candidates and their talking heads.

Budd MacKenzie
Lafayette

YES on Lafayette's Measure C

Dear Editor,

For the past two years the city has held community meetings to listen to the thoughts and opinions of residents on a 20-year vision for Lafayette's future, The Citizens' Vision.

More than 700 people participated and said that their priorities were to preserve open space, improve traffic flow and parking, enhance public safety, and add a new downtown park to enhance the quality of life in Lafayette.

Voting YES on Measure C will give Lafayette the funds it needs to accomplish those visions of its future.
Anne Grodin
Lafayette

Because of the high amount of election-related letters received this issue, they will appear on pages A13, A14 and A15, organized by category.

Preserve Lafayette's Hillside with C

Dear Editor,

Please vote yes on Measure C. Measure C will give Lafayette resources that will make Lafayette an even better place to live, but most important in our view, that will help Lafayette protect and preserve open space for everyone's benefit for years to come.

We cannot take for granted that the undeveloped portions of our hillsides and ridgelines will remain undeveloped. Most of the open hillsides and ridgelines that we see are privately owned, and the owners have the right to build — in accordance with the city's ordinances. The pressure to build will continue to grow, and even with the most exacting application of the city's hillside ordinances, we will see buildings on the hillsides and ridges, the open vistas will be lost, and trail corridors will be blocked.

Lafayette has simply not had the resources necessary to protect and preserve open space. This is our opportunity to significantly improve Lafayette. We cannot let it pass by.

Please vote Yes on Measure C.
Carl and Sharon Anduri
Lafayette

Disappointed by Measure C

Dear Editor,

I now understand why the East Bay Times recommended a NO vote on Measure C. The "sales tax increase is too much for one bite" and lasts "29 years, a ridiculously long time for a tax that could be used for any government purpose" (East Bay Times 9/20/16). Surprisingly, it requires only a simple majority (50% + 1 vote) to pass.

Measure C lists spending priorities based on survey responses of 4 percent of our residents. There is no legal requirement that the money will be spent on only these items. I am disappointed that what some are calling a "blank check" for the city requires only a simple majority to pass. When you ask citizens to vote for a tax of this size (\$100 million) and duration (29 years), it should require at least 2/3 of the votes to pass. If it can't achieve that threshold, then it is insufficiently supported by voters and should be reexamined to identify its shortcomings.

I happily endorsed and voted for the OTHER Measure C — the school bond we passed in June with over 73 percent of the vote. It required a 2/3 vote and restricted the use of funds to itemized needs. THIS Measure C is starkly different. It requires only a simple majority and does not legally restrict the use of funds.

Unlike Orinda, whose voters passed by 69 percent a 10-year sales tax generating approximately \$7 million, and Moraga, whose voters passed by 70 percent a 20-year sales tax generating approximately \$20 million, Lafayette's Measure C would last 29 years and generate approximately \$100 million. The magnitude of Lafayette's proposed tax is out of sync with our neighboring communities' taxes.

I love Lafayette, but I don't love Measure C. I hope that in the future our city leaders will follow an approach more similar to those of our school board or our neighboring towns.

Linda Murphy
Lafayette

Vote Yes on Measure C – A Vote for Increased Public Safety

Dear Editor,

I believe Lamorinda residents and especially Lafayette voters should vote for Measure C on the Nov. 8 ballot.

Our residents are increasingly concerned about public safety. Part of the Measure C revenue will be used to further assist Lafayette's police department in order to ensure we have sufficient personnel and the tools to keep the city safe.

The monies Measure C generates will also help preserve open space and improve downtown parking.

Note the money raised by Measure C will stay in Lafayette, and expenditures will be overseen by a Citizens' Oversight Committee.

Let's make Lafayette a better place and vote Yes on Measure C.
Erling Horn
Lafayette

Yes on Measure C

Dear Editor,

I understand that within our community there is some concern over the need for, and transparency around, future expenditures that would result from passage of Measure C and the significant revenue that would be developed by this increase in sales tax. We should always demand clarity when taxes are imposed, but also recognize when they are necessary for the good of the community.

I believe that many of us agree that there are serious infrastructure needs that we in Lafayette need to address, that these have been well-captured by the wording of Measure C, and that we have reason to expect and trust our government leadership to be responsive to the community in the future, based on past performance and the commitment of local folks to pay attention to how our representatives perform.

Measure C addresses local issues, for example by preserving additional open space, addressing parking and traffic concerns and enhancing our police services. A Citizens Oversight Committee will monitor the way Measure C funds are spent, and this transparent process is very encouraging.

I urge my neighbors to vote Yes on Measure C.
Roger Falcone
Lafayette

Measure C is Example of Citizen Involvement

Dear Editor,

Measure C proposes a sales tax increment, a general tax. Since general taxes cannot be legally restricted to specific purposes, voting for a general tax requires a level of trust in those making decisions on how to spend those revenues.

Over the past 20 years, the city of Lafayette has managed to stretch modest city revenues and find additional funds to reconstruct all of the city's failed roads; develop a successful and vibrant downtown; and build a beautiful Veterans Hall and a library. Through good times and recessions, Lafayette has balanced its budgets and maintained a healthy emergency fund.

All five members of the city council, as well as the new council member, who will take his seat in

December, have pledged to make the elements of the Citizens' Vision for Lafayette the priority for all expenditures of the sales tax revenues. They will seek to leverage those precious revenues to obtain additional funding for the Citizens' Vision.

A Citizens Oversight Committee will report regularly on the revenues of the sales tax increment and the expenditures made from those revenues. To make that easier, Lafayette's budget will include a separate budget category for the sales tax revenues so that the committee can see exactly what is received and what is spent.

Measure C is an example of how to make citizen involvement in city affairs work. The financial stewardship the city has demonstrated over the past decades will continue for the coming decades as well.

Love Lafayette – Vote Yes on Measure C.
Mary McCosker
Lafayette

Why Were Signs Removed?

Dear Editor,

Two "No on C" signs were recovered Friday, Oct. 21, from the Lafayette public works yard, one homemade by a resident, and the other made by Save Lafayette. Both were given to me on Friday after the recovery. Both of these were put up at Springhill and Pleasant Hill Road on Oct. 19. Both were removed by city staff on Thursday, along with possibly other signs at this location (we don't know how many others, if any). Four signs remained at this location after staff removed these. Neither of these "No on C" signs were in violation of any city signage rules, as the homemade sign was to the right of the bulk of the signs, and the official sign to the left, possibly too close to another sign. Both were recovered by another citizen from the public works yard.

I know that staff was instructed on Friday to not continue removing specifically the "No on C" signs, or at least not to specifically target any one sign over any other. I also know that on Oct. 19, at least one of the official "No on C" signs was in an inappropriate location in the median on Pleasant Hill Road near Acalanes High School. It's clear that this one should have been removed.

What troubles me is the removal of the homemade sign. It was not in any clear violation of any "reasonable" city signage rules, as it was put in a "reasonable" location at this site. It is clearly homemade, but wasn't any larger or smaller than the other signs. I have been trying hard to think of any reason that a staffer could have used to justify removal.

The resident who made the sign did reach out to me, and doesn't feel justified in putting it back up. That is just awful, and should not be how our residents feel about expressing their opinions in our city.

Please, some acknowledgement by staff for the reasons why this one particular sign was removed should be made public. Justifications should be given, or apologies expressed.

Susan Candell
Lafayette

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

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