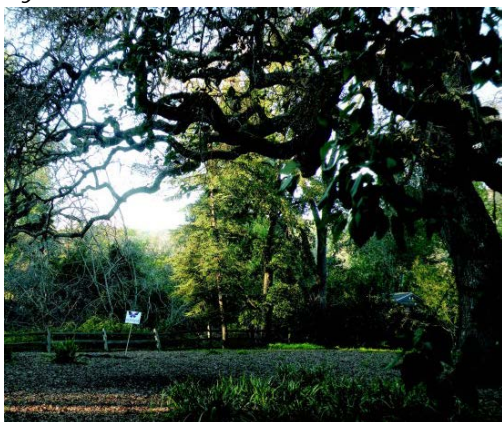


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## Council: Still no decision on Leigh Creekside Park

By Nick Marnell



Leigh Creekside Park Photo John T. Miller

A decision that some suggested would require the city council to channel the wisdom of Solomon may now force Lafayette lawmakers to exhibit the patience of Job.

With residents packed into the community meeting hall, the crowd spilling out the rear exit door and having dug in for a long night of public comment, Lafayette city attorney Mala Subramanian recommended that the city council postpone action on the Leigh Creekside Park agenda item, a hearing to amend the park master plan to allow play structures to be added to the facility.

Late correspondence to the city questioned the amount of noise generated by kids playing in the park once the city added the play structures. "There are things about the noise ordinance that we'd like to address in more detail," Subramanian told the council at the Jan. 23 meeting. "We want the documents to be as strong as

possible for you."

Those documents include a study that indicates the environmental impacts of the park project will be less than significant with proposed mitigations, such as hourly limits on construction noise and the use of heavy equipment.

Council member Cameron Burks did not hide his displeasure with the continuance recommendation, questioning just how long these last-minute comments can keep pouring in, in effect delaying things yet again. "Can we draw a line in the sand? When do we say, enough?" Burks asked. Unfortunately the risk of another delay is always there, the city attorney said.

But since so many guests came to the meeting to speak on the park project, the council voted unanimously to hold the public comment portion of the hearing, with the understanding that the council would vote on nothing else about Leigh Creekside Park that evening.

More than 40 speakers took to the dais, and nearly all of them pitched for a passive or active use of the park. The passives, who outpolled the actives by more than 2 to 1, generally sought to preserve the park in its natural state, while the actives, claiming that most of their supporters were at home that night with their kids, preferred the city add the play structures for use by children.

"Please keep Leigh Creekside Park as it is. Do not destroy the only quiet space in downtown Lafayette," wrote Tony Lyons, countered by Kelsey Mesroul. "Our children are quickly aging out of the park and we live within walking distance - I would have loved to have this four years ago!" she said.

"If this park goes active any peacefulness and reflection will be gone," submitted Melanie Peterson-Katz, rebuffed by Joel Flory, and many others, using these exact words: "The play elements are natural-looking, low-maintenance, tied to Lafayette's history and are placed so as not to block interior views."

Many speakers focused on kids and how much more important they are than nature, and that there is no playground to take the children in the area. Others complained that the park needed no play structures and asked how the city could afford the \$550,000 for the proposed park improvements. The city expects to fund the project through park fees.

Three hours later, the speakers having concluded and the room much emptier, the council closed out the item. But the controversy, another version of the development versus preservation argument that plays out often in Lamorinda, will resume at the Feb. 27 council meeting.

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