

LAMORINDA WEEKLY



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Peter Brassinga of the Rancho Colorados swim team came in first in the boys 15-18 100-yard breaststroke with 59:52.

Photo Gint Federas

LSC High Point goes to Springbrook

Over 940 swimmers from 60 teams met over the weekend of July 29-30 at the sixth annual Lafayette Swim Conference Championship Meet, held at Acalanes High School where families erected tents, set out lawn chairs and blasted music in the packed breezeways of the school. High fives and congratulations were shared among the steady stream of swimsuit-clad competitors on the hot day. Claudia Dumais, a 12-year-old Lafayette swimmer at the Lafayette Moraga Youth Association, qualified for five different events – the butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle and the individual medley but she was only allowed to swim in two different events. “I practice for over an hour five days a

week,” said Claudia, who also plays basketball and soccer. “I began swimming competitively when I was 9. I have been able to improve by learning new techniques.” She hopes to continue swimming through high school.

Springbrook Swim Team landed the top slot with 5,537 points followed by Rancho Colorados Swim Team with 4,295.50 and LMYA Dolphins Swim Team with 2,847.50 points.

Nine swimmers broke records at the meet, five by individual swimmers and four by relay teams. (See the list of LSC results and individual winners on page C2.)
 - By Jon Kingdon

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An inconvenient liability, presented by Lamorinda public agencies

By Nick Marnell

According to the latest audited financial statements, Lamorinda school districts, municipalities and the local fire district carry a combined net pension and retiree health care liability of nearly \$200 million, more than \$3,000 per Lamorinda resident.

“It’s a gigantic problem, and a well-reported crisis, but residents aren’t paying attention,” said Seth Freeman, Moraga financial advisor.

Net pension liability is the difference between what the pension plan has in the bank and what the plan owes its members and retirees. Calculations are similar for other post employment benefits, or retiree health benefits, resulting in a net OPEB liability.

Together with investment losses from the Great Recession, not achieving projected investment returns and the longer lifespan of retirees, the dollar amount that Lamorinda public agencies owe to their pensioners - but do not have in the bank - has increased from \$164.9 million in 2015 to \$195.2 million in 2016.

Why the big jump? Partly because pension plan managers like the California Public Employees’ Retirement System and the

Contra Costa County Employees’ Retirement Association have experienced lower than expected returns on the investments they use to fund retiree benefits. For example, CalPERS announced investment gains of only 4.4 percent over 10 years through fiscal year 2017. The low returns add to the pension liability, as pension plan managers base their expected gains on percentages ranging anywhere from 7 to 8 percent.

“The projected returns in general are rarely achieved,” said Freeman. “Not only are the amounts large now, until they are dealt with, they will only get larger.”

Among Lamorinda public agencies, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District leads the way with nearly \$64 million in net pension and OPEB liability, followed by the Acalanes Union High School District with \$55 million. The Orinda Union School District and Lafayette School District report nearly \$30 million each, with the Moraga School District at about \$13 million. The Town of Moraga reports a net pension liability of \$3.8 million but no net OPEB liability.

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Window of opportunity missed for fast permanent restoration

By Sophie Braccini



The sinkhole site during construction

Photo Andy Scheck

The work for restoring the sinkhole finally started on Rheem Boulevard, with the consequence of closing that arterial until October. Public Works Director Edric Kwan explains that the town had to wait over a year for the Federal Highway Administration – through the California Department of Transportation – to validate the restoration plan. He adds that the FHWA changed its permanent restoration process for the 2016-17 winter damages in California, something Orinda was able to benefit from, but that came too late for the

Moraga sinkhole and ended too early for the Canyon bridge.

There is a difference between permanent restoration and emergency reopening. Emergency reopening funding gets expedited and approved within a few months. It has limitations, too: usually the agency funds only the reopening of one lane of traffic. As soon as a drive-through is restored, the situation is no longer an emergency and the approval process for the permanent restoration of the damaged infrastructure takes a much longer time.

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