

Letters to the Editor

Letter from the editor regarding teen column

Over the past several years Lamorinda Weekly has published opinion columns written by local teens about issues they felt would resonate with other teens in the area. Alexandra Reinecke has written for this publication over the past year about subjects including the stress of AP classes, patriotism and about the joys and angst of taking the SAT. On Jan. 10 we published "Cobalt Scraps," in which Reinecke broached the subject of college admissions and how she felt that some students are treated differently in the admissions process. She has since revised her article, which can be found here on the Lamorinda Weekly website (www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1123/Cobalt-Scraps.html), and has written a Letter to the Editor regarding her original column below.

Jennifer Wake
Editor

A note from the author

In drafting, "Cobalt Scraps," the opinion piece that was originally published on Jan. 10, I was attempting to shed light on a controversial subject that hits close to home—college admissions and differential standards for disparate applicants in that process. The article was in no way intended to offend or target any individual students and I regret that it may have been received that way.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Reinecke

A response to 'Cobalt Scraps'

The recent publication of the article titled "Cobalt Scraps" has sparked an interesting conversation amongst local high school students. While non-student athletes are nodding their heads in agreement, and student athletes are listing the reasons they deserved to be recruited, I don't know exactly where I stand. I am a senior student athlete not being recruited to play either of my sports—swimming or golf—in college.

I respect the athletic recruits at my high school—Miramonte High School—because I know how much work they have put in to excel at their sports. It is undeniable that in order to be recruited to play a sport in college, a student has to be one of the best.

Reinecke's article fails to mention the hours that student athletes spend on their sport. Like academic success, athletic achievement takes a great amount of time and work. Time that student athletes spend at practice is time taken away from school work. The lack of citation that the referenced "0.9 difference" in the GPA of students accepted into schools based on merit and recruitment makes me question its validity.

Nonetheless, a difference does exist, and there are lower admissions standards for athletic recruits. It exists because student athletes inevitably have less time to focus on their school work. The word "student-athlete" itself implies that athletes are students too. It is not accurate to invalidate their success and assume that they are not destined for high achieving careers. If colleges began demanding higher test scores from athletes, then why don't they start demanding that academic students have to pass a fitness test. Criticizing an athletic recruit for their test scores is like criticizing all other applicants for the amount of pushups they can do. There are so many different ways to measure a student's fit for a college. A "one

size fits all" admissions standard does not and never will exist.

All these points said, I believe Reinecke's article shines a light on a more important issue: teenagers' inability to celebrate each other's success. It happens every single year, students criticize each other on their ability to get into certain schools. "She only got in because she was a legacy," "he only got in because his parents made a donation," "she only got in because she had a connection," and "he didn't deserve to get in because he did not even work hard to get good grades."

I am tired of hearing the endless reasons that students believe make their peers unqualified to get into a university. It is time for students to celebrate each other's success and stop tearing each other down.

Reagan Tierney
Orinda

What's wrong with a plan?

Change will inevitably come to downtown (and frankly, I wish it would). We can't avoid it by sticking with an outdated, boilerplate general plan from the '80s and simply shrugging our shoulders. We citizens have it within our power to affect change in a positive way by participating in a thoughtful planning process.

We must also recognize the recent shift in state policy which is increasing pressure on transit-rich cities like ours to address the current housing shortage. We only have a few years until Orinda must certify another state-required housing element (which details where and how Orinda plans to accommodate future housing growth to meet regional targets). Meanwhile, the state is taking more aggressive steps to monitor our progress under the existing housing element and introducing bills to override local zoning restrictions near transit. The City Council will likely have to consider the possibility of encouraging more housing within our downtown. Why wait until the last minute to start this process? Or worse, why let the state do it for us without our input? Planning is good. The city council should not avoid or delay the process of downtown planning. Following the thorough assessments of our downtown made by Urban Land Institute and Main Street USA, city staff recommended creating a Streetscape Master Plan. After hearing the inspiring ideas of the two professional panels, this is a very timid step toward progress that doesn't address the real issues of our downtown. A streetscape plan deals in sidewalks and benches, not in the fundamental framework of what we want development in our downtown to look like. Alternatively, a downtown-specific plan could outline preferred building styles, incentivize development to utilize the creek downtown, improve the flow of parking, create community gathering spaces, draw in desired tenants, and so on. But the City Council has not started work on a downtown plan.

I want a better downtown right now so that my family and I can begin enjoying it. But the first step is for our local elected leaders to let us determine as a community what we want and then make a plan to achieve it. There are strong voices against doing anything, but I urge the City Council to listen to the rest of us who are disappointed with the state of our downtown and who want to start with a plan as soon as possible. Let's go!

Arran Schultz
Orinda



Maria Eberle, REALTOR®

(925) 478-7190
Maria@MariaEberle.com
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