



Published March 7th, 2018

Letters to the Editor

Vote yes! Save our storm drains!

Moraga's need for this user fee is rooted in history. Since the Town's very inception it has been forced to live on an economic starvation diet. The county collects our real estate taxes and then returns a portion to us - and it is a very modest portion! In our case, 5.32% is returned to us. Our return is the lowest in the entire county! For Lafayette the return is 6.66%, for Orinda 7.39%. In dollar terms, for every \$1.00 we receive, Lafayette receives \$1.25 and Orinda \$1.39.

Does that seem fair? Whether it is or not, it is our reality. Our current problem is not that we have spent foolishly over the years as some would have us believe. It is because inequities have left us starved for adequate funds over these years.

Whether you are a household or a town, when your income is limited you spend it on what you must and defer what you reasonably can. But we can no longer reasonably defer storm drain maintenance. Our storm drains are now 50 - 60 years old. To address this problem we need a fair and sustainable income stream. With the proposed user fee, most homeowners will pay only \$120 per year. That \$10.00 per month is about the price of two lattes at Starbucks. Is that asking too much?

Ignoring the problem is not an option. To do so just invites more sinkhole types of disasters and would be financially irresponsible. Repairs not undertaken now will be substantially more expensive later.

Vote yes! Save our storm drains. It is the only reasonable and responsible thing to do.

Robert Foxall
Moraga

Climate change as property rights issue

Recently, I read about the concept of climate change is a property rights issue and, as such, the government has a duty to ensure that Industry A's property rights does not violate someone else's property rights. Take for example, the people living near the coastal areas within Louisiana, Miami Beach, Chesapeake Bay area, or near the coastal areas of Alaska These areas have been homes and businesses of many people living and thriving for generations. Now, for many their homes and businesses are either damaged or lost due to sea level rise.

Does the property rights of the petroleum companies override the property rights of these people in Louisiana, Florida, Virginia or Alaska? The protection of property rights is within the purview of government to level differences between the power and influence of the petroleum industry to the people that have suffered from property loss. So how come the executive branch of our government is not stepping in to help?

It is now for the Congress to step up to take the leadership position. Our representatives should join the House Climate Caucus and pass a carbon fee and dividend program in order to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions.

Clifton Louie
Orinda

Local teacher salaries

Lafayette schools are some of the best in the state and one of the main reasons families move to Lafayette. Lafayette teachers are experienced and dedicated professionals who go over and above their job requirements to meet the needs of every student. Despite our desire to settle, Lafayette teachers are still negotiating with the Lafayette School District over the 2016-2017 contract. Our last raise on the salary schedule, for only 1.5%, was for the 2015-2016 school year. The LAFSD has only offered 0% on the salary schedule since then, despite rising inflation.

The LAFSD has ended up with more revenue than their projections in each of the last five years. In four of the five years, revenue has been over \$1 million dollars higher than projected. While the state only requires a 3% reserve, the LAFSD has over 14%. The Governor's proposed budget for next year continues that trend. Since they clearly have the money, we can only conclude the District does not value its teachers. Lafayette teachers are not unreasonable. During the Great Recession, teachers accepted three years of 0% raises, furlough days, and increases in out of pocket health insurance costs. We were told when the economy improved, we would be made whole. Unfortunately, we have only fallen farther behind after subsequent years of small bonuses and small raises which have not kept up with inflation. Now, with the economy booming, the District continues to offer us 0%.

This is no longer sustainable for Lafayette teachers. Other districts that currently pay more than LAFSD continue to give raises to keep up with the high cost of living in the Bay Area. To make ends meet, 68% of teachers at Springhill Elementary now work second jobs. If we want to continue to have top-notch teachers in Lafayette, we need to keep pay comparable to neighboring districts.

You can support Lafayette teachers by emailing the school board at LSDBoard@lafsd.org or attending the next Lafayette School Board meeting on Wednesday, March 21 at 7 p.m. in the Stanley Middle School library. More information is available at LafayetteEducationAssociation.org.

Brittany Buchel
Springhill Elementary teacher

Private roads

I want to thank the Lamorinda Weekly for reporting on the issue of private streets in Orinda and the inequitable treatment given the 20 percent of Orinda residents and taxpayers who live on these streets. I want to make it clear to the community that the creation of this separate class of street was not the doing of the developers of these streets or of the taxpayers who live on them. It was the result of the City, and before incorporation the County, being unwilling to pay to maintain these streets while collecting the same property taxes from the new homes as everyone else pays. Since 2012 Orinda voters have voted in \$70 million of new taxes, payable over 20 years, to repair the 64 miles of public residential streets which the City had let deteriorate. The 1,500 homes that are on "private" streets will pay their "fair" share of these taxes; \$15 million in total. Not one cent of these taxes will go to repair any of the 30 miles of "private" streets these taxpayers live on. The latest draft of the CIOC's Road Plan informs the City that it will have to raise an additional \$2.5 million per year to maintain the public roads it has spent so much to repair. Everyone will be expected to pay for this additionally needed tax. But, again, not one cent of it will be used to maintain any of the 30 miles of streets that 20 percent of Orinda lives on. This is not fair and, if those 20 percent reject the tax, the City will not obtain sufficient funds to maintain the existing public roads. We have asked the City to form a Task Force to address this inequity. If you want to know more about this go to the web site www.OrindaRoadFacts.info.

Steve Cohn
Orinda

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