

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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Kelsey Levant, left, and John Stepp work in the Campolindo garden with advisor Jane Kelson looking on.

Photo John T. Miller

Learning farm to table techniques

By John T. Miller

Like keepers of the secrets to survival, a small percentage of students at Miramonte, Campolindo and Acalanes high schools are connected to garden projects where they learn the rudiments of seed production, cultivation and harvesting of food.

Why is this knowledge important? A report by Bayer Global estimates that “by the middle of the century, the demand for agricultural products will be 50 percent higher than in 2013, while at the same time, the amount of U.S. farmland

is decreasing.” The USDA reports that 6.6 million acres were lost from 2008-15, and the amount continues to decline.

When these students approach middle age, how will they feed themselves? The answers may be in what they learn through their garden projects.

Helping with these efforts is the Global Student Embassy, a nonprofit group. Kelsey Ring, an educator with GSE, coordinates the AUHSD gardens, leading the students in activities that connect the gardens with global environmental issues

(Las Lomas also has a garden, but is not in our Lamorinda circulation area).

GSE promotes cultural exchange with Latin American countries. Over spring break, nine students from Campolindo traveled with Spanish teacher Concepcion Martinez to Nicaragua and learned how to work with a farming group dealing with soil destroyed by growing cotton. One Miramonte student traveled to Ecuador. Students from Ecuador and Nicaragua also visit the U.S. to support local projects. ... continued on page A13

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

Letters to the Editor	A11
Community Service	B4
Not to be Missed	B8-B9
HOW TO CONTACT US	B9
Classified	C2
Shop Moraga	C4

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DANA GREEN

Moraga digs its way out of fiscal emergency

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga town council members asked questions of administrative director Joe Tanner on May 8 before they agreed to support staff's recommendation to rescind the fiscal emergency that the town declared 10 months ago. Council members were concerned about the unsure timing of reimbursement for the completed repairs that depleted the town's reserves, and that the town could find itself in a vulnerable position again.

The town's reserves, which dropped to \$700,000 in July, have rebounded to \$1.4 million – before receipt of any federal reimbursement. Better than expected revenue and savings have helped improve the town's financial outlook. Tanner and Edric Kwan, public works director, confirmed that close to \$900,000 is expected from Caltrans in June and an additional \$1.4 million in September.

Council Member Roger Wykle asked Kwan to explain the reimbursement process and how his team was keeping on top of collecting the money. The director described a highly coded and multi-staged process involving several public agencies, which was taking time but was on track. The two anticipated reimbursements correspond to the settlement of the work to repair the Rheem sinkhole. The reopening of the Canyon bridge was also declared emergency work worthy of federal reimbursement, but Congress has not yet approved money for California to deal with all its past year's emergencies, of which the Canyon bridge is but a very small part.

Council Member Kymberleigh Korpus asked Tanner if he knew if the real estate market in Moraga had suffered from the fiscal emergency declaration. ... continued on page A13

Fraudulent voter forms reappear in Lafayette

By Nick Marnell

Anxiety flooded through Lafayette as reports of fraudulent voter information forms emerged, rekindling concerns of a similar situation that occurred during the 2016 general election.

“I received a voter guide addressed to someone who, to the best of my knowledge, has never lived at this address,” said Lafayette resident Stacy Schirmer. Scott Sommer received five false voter packets mailed to his address and Victoria Singh received two. “This actually started with the last big election. I reported them to the voting agency this time,” Singh said.

Reporting the names to the county elections division is the proper thing to do, said Scott Konopasek, assistant registrar of voters for Contra Costa County. The erroneous registrants in these situations are not real people, he said, but falsely supplied information on a voter registration form provided by a signature gatherer in 2016. Once the phony names are reported, the elections division will cancel the fraudulent voter and the name will not appear on the roster at the polls.

“This is not an attempt at voter fraud and we have not received any such reports,” Konopasek said.

Through mid-May, the elections division had received 40 reports of 67 fictitious voters, and all of the reports came from addresses in Lafayette. In every case, the fictitious voters were registered through a voter registration drive. “Who knows why in 2016 a signature-gathering employee defrauded his employer by creating fictitious voters in Lafayette in 2016,” Konopasek said. He confirmed that the district attorney has issued an arrest warrant for one of the signature-gathering suspects, who is not a Lafayette resident.

“There is nothing in this situation that was created by or poses any threat to the current political situation in Lafayette,” Konopasek said. “I live adjacent to Lafayette and I am directly affected by the effects of the Deer Hill development and the outcome of Measure L. I am well aware of the emotions in the city and neighboring areas.”

Those who receive suspicious voter information or ballots should call the Contra Costa County Elections Division at (925) 335-7800, or send an email to voter.services@vote.cccounty.us. Include the fictitious name and the address to where the bogus paperwork was sent, and then destroy the material.

Civic News A1-A14	Life in Lamorinda B1-B10	Camps B5-B7	Sports C1-C3	Our Homes D1-D16
Compromise reached for Wilder sidewalks – page A6.	Acalanes musical director Norm Dea retires – page B1.	Fun-filled half-day summer camp listings – page B5.	Lamorinda lacrosse advance to NCS playoffs – page C1.	Looking for signs of Sudden Oak Death – page D1.
Fire Districts A8				
MOFD finance strategy questions arise – page A8.				