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Letters to the editor

In support of cows

I am replying to the article about "The question of cows" by John T. Miller. I am grateful that he wrote about cows grazing in open land. He was pretty articulate. The benefits are many, the drawbacks are few. The statement about interference with oak tree regeneration can be easily dismissed in this area. Take a look at the photos of Briones Park and the grasslands of this area from the 1930s or 1950s and now. You can easily see that the oaks have regenerated and filled in many areas.

I feel sorry for the people who grew up in the bigger cities and have never had the opportunity to be around farm animals and wild animals. Perhaps it is time they grow into that wisdom by learning how to be around cows and other animals. Who might like to take on such a project? It is better to develop creative solutions than to whine. I would challenge someone to go for the opportunity!!

Mary Anne Anderson
Orinda

Community Comments on Changes to Downtown Orinda

I write to correct the reporting of my comments at the January 29 ConnectOrinda Workshop. I did not say that bikes should be allowed access to the existing concrete overpass over the exit from westbound Highway 24 to Camino Pablo. Bikes already have such access.

What I stated was that the existing bike-pedestrian overpass should be designated as a bike route, and that Camino Pablo under Highway 24 and BART should no longer be designated as a bike route. This would encourage bike riders to use the overpass and would moot their concerns that the Camino Pablo underpass is dangerous. It is a better solution than converting one lane of Camino Pablo southbound to a bike lane, which would not only inconvenience many thousands of drivers to benefit a handful of bicyclists, but would also seriously hinder evacuation in the event of a wild fire, as we learned from the Paradise fire.

The existing overpass could also be designated a bike "dismount zone" to avoid pedestrian-bike conflicts, at least at peak weekday times. Such zones are not uncommon in congested areas, including many college campuses.

The City has a contractual obligation with Caltrans that the City would maintain the overpass. It has not done so. When asked to explain the failure, Planning Director Buckley stated he did not know why it has not been made a priority, even though he is one of the people responsible. Public Works Director Theis, whose responsibility this is, has instead focused on other matters.

Lack of funds is not an excuse. The City has funds, but chooses to spend them elsewhere. Moreover, the City could have applied for TDA Article 3 funding, but has failed to do so.

Nick Waranoff
Orinda

A comment about Council Member Candell

I read with increasing dismay the recent legal correspondence regarding the proposed Terraces of Lafayette development (www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/quick-links/hot-topics/terraces-of-lafayette/terraces-2018-documents) excerpted below.

"Councilmember Candell cannot credibly claim to be anything other than a resolute Project opponent, and she thus cannot represent the city in any capacity regarding the ongoing processing of the Project, whether in a noticed public meeting, closed session, or otherwise, including in any meetings or communications with City staff or her future Council colleagues. Moreover, once recused, she cannot even resume her role as a private citizen Project opponent."

Councilmember Candell can factually claim to be Lafayette voters' choice - by a wide margin - for her current (not future) seat on our City Council. She can further claim to be a resolute proponent of our City's General Plan and zoning, which govern land use decisions throughout the City for on behalf of all residents and businesses; and she can claim the protection of the First Amendment to express her opinions freely, the same as everybody else. This applicant's ongoing effort to bully Councilmember Candell out of doing her job for the voters of Lafayette is outrageous; this new contention that the specialness of "The Project" somehow supersedes the US Constitution, is preposterous.

At no time in the long and fractious history of "The Project" has anyone approved 315 new apartments for that site near the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Hwy 24. Traffic and pollution problems were so obvious in 2013 that even the applicant proposed the 44 Homes as an alternative. By 2018 those concerns had grown to the extent that Lafayette voters soundly quashed the Homes in the Measure L referendum, despite (or because of) the applicant's extravagantly funded Yes-on-L campaign at that time. That intersection is now more congested than ever, and costs the many Lafayetteans who live off Pleasant Hill Road on either side and commute by car, a huge bite out of their morning and night, every working day. Basic common sense will tell you that the current proposal - to exacerbate that misery with 315 apartments right there - will never square with sound land use planning, and will never fly with Lafayette voters. The site's current zoning allows 14 homes, thus giving Councilmember Candell and every other Lafayette voter

who drives a car, 301 eminently logical fact-based unbiased reasons to oppose "The Project" as proposed. Other applicants bring zoning-conformant development proposals before our City Council all the time, and get them approved; new construction is booming in Lafayette. Perhaps the Terraces applicants should consider that alternative to win Ms. Candell's support fairly, before smearing her as "biased."

Most troubling of all is the deafening silence of the Council in response to this applicant's ongoing attack on Ms. Candell. Teams worthy of the name protect their rookies. Lafayette voters have said loud and clear that they support Ms. Candell and oppose overdevelopment at Deer Hill. For the rest of our Council to acquiesce meekly in the attempted gagging of Ms. Candell, by this applicant with a long history of bad behavior behind a fundamentally bad idea, traduces your responsibility to one another, to the City and the voters. I implore you again to pass a resolution affirming that each of you will decide the Terraces project, fairly and on its merits, in whatever form it comes back before you next, and that none of you will recuse.

Cathy Beier
Lafayette

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