



See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

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Safety of 40-foot section of exposed pipeline in Briones questioned



The exposed, high-pressure PG&E pipeline near the Springhill neighborhood is unsupported at each end and sags mid-span.

Photos provided

By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette's recently formed Gas Safety Task Force has become aware of an exposed, 40-foot section of high transmission pipeline, which it says poses a "significant and imminent threat" in a populated, high fire risk area; pipeline that the Pacific Gas & Electric Company says is safe.

The task force was formed this year by residents concerned about safety, to work in an alliance with the city, PG&E and the California Public Utilities Commission following work done by grassroots group Save Lafayette Trees, which objected to PG&E's plans to remove hundreds of trees as part of its statewide Community Pipeline Safety Initiative – an initiative SLT calls unnecessary.

The PG&E pipeline in question, serving all of Lafayette, Moraga and parts of Walnut Creek, according to the task force, lies close to the

Buckeye Ranch Trail, near the Girl Scout Camp at the end of Springhill Road in Briones Regional Park. It lies across an eroding creek bank, with trees looming over the pipe in an area where other trees have recently fallen.

"Aside from the potential of falling trees, the span seems unsupported at either end with a slight sag mid-span," say GSTF members Michael and Gina Dawson in an email Sept. 5 to the city council. "The area where the pipeline emerges from the soil is eroding. There is coating damage with bare steel exposed to atmospheric conditions and the span is in a high fire zone."

PG&E says the pipeline is safe. An email statement from PG&E spokesperson Tamar Sarkisian on Sept. 11 reads, "The safety of our customers and the communities that we serve is PG&E's most important responsibility. The pipeline in Briones Regional Park is safe."

However, a letter dated

Sept. 13 from Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Deputy Fire Chief Aaron McAlister to PG&E expresses the fire district's concern following an evaluation of the situation.

McAlister notes the district's specific worries concern the pipeline's location, open to the public and immediately adjacent to a public access area, saying that "I am concerned that a person could use the pipe as a walkway adding weight to the pipe and causing further degradation of its strength and integrity." The district is concerned too with the potential for wild land fire, and the possibility for seismic activity in the area further threaten-

ing the integrity of the pipe.
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Appraisal of Boswell's site approved for city offices consideration



Photo Pippa Fisher

The old Boswell's store, currently occupied by the temporary Halloween store until Nov. 5, is an ideal location for new city offices.

By Pippa Fisher

The Lafayette City Council is moving forward cautiously

with an appraisal of the former Boswell's property to look into the feasibility of purchasing the site for city offices.

Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson reminded the council that in 2017 council members Mark Mitchell and Cam Burks had formed a subcommittee to study a number of potential sites on which permanent city offices could be located and had identified the Boswell's site as being the most appropriate, especially given its size and location between the library and the police station. At the time, however, the owner was not interested in selling.

With the closure of Boswell's earlier this year a new subcommittee consisting of Burks and Vice Mayor Susan Candell was formed. Candell has been talking to the owners who have expressed an interest in selling now "for the right price."

Robinson warned that it would be a lengthy process to completion, even after the purchase of the property, should it go ahead.

Public comment on the item favored the purchase, especially if the city were en-

couraged to "think outside the box" and look for ways to also incorporate some sort of community center as well.

With the item back to the council for discussion, Burks said he is now questioning the wisdom of committing \$5 million or more at this time. "It doesn't seem pertinent to me to even consider it down the road ... if we're in a situation which is tantamount to a crisis because of litigation costs that we're up against," he said, referring to the multiple legal cases in which the city is currently embroiled.

Furthermore, Burks said that he respectfully asks to be removed from the subcommittee.

Although all echoed Burks' concern about spending, and applauded his fiscally conservative thoughts, the other four council members all agreed they could support moving forward at least with the appraisal for now, costing up to \$15,000. The vote passed four to one.

Mayor Mike Anderson pointed out this is a very long-term process and said that the city needs to get the appraisal. "We need that baseline information to have the conversation," he said.

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Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council
Monday, Sept. 23, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings
Acalanes Union High School District
Wednesday, Oct. 2, 7 p.m.
AUHSD Board Room
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Planning Commission
Monday, Oct. 7, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review
Monday, Sept. 23, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Arts & Science Discovery Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Lafayette School District
Wednesday, Oct. 16, 7 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
Stanley M.S. Library
3477 School St., Lafayette
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us