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## Lamorinda elected officials continue to serve without compensation

By Nick Marnell

On April 14, the Concord City Council members voted to immediately cut their own salaries 10% to help ease financial pressure on the city caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Each council member's compensation dropped from \$1,352 to \$1,217 monthly.

A motion like that could not be proposed by any Lamorinda-based public agency because the elected officials of the Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda municipal councils, the four Lamorinda school districts and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District do not earn one cent for their service.

"We began as a city dedicated to small government," Lafayette Mayor Mike Anderson said. "It's been the tradition, yet a lot of people don't realize that we do not get paid."

A Contra Costa County grand jury realized that elected officials were getting paid, sometimes excessively.

"There are a large number of boards and councils that are being compensated amounts which may be viewed as exorbitant," read the 2011 grand jury report that carried the telling title, "Elected Board Membership - Public Service or Public Employment?" The report ordered 16 of the 19 county municipalities to conduct a public review of the compensation given to their elected officials.

Exempt from the grand jury order: Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, whose elected officials earned nothing then, nothing now and nothing since the formation of their municipalities.

"Orinda was incorporated as a volunteer community. It's always been like that. People volunteer for commissions and committees, and the community wants to keep us a volunteer city," Orinda Vice Mayor Amy Worth said.

Moraga has also maintained a minimal government philosophy since the town was formed in 1974. "We have an enormous network of community service groups, which add to our small-town feel, and we rely on those groups for fundraising" Mayor Kymberleigh Korpus said. "There's no extra money in our budget to pay council members."

Serving on a volunteer basis are not only the Lamorinda municipal council members but also the trustees of the four Lamorinda school districts. "They receive no salary, no stipend, no health benefits, no life insurance. Full volunteers," said John Nickerson, superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District. That same compensation plan is awarded all five MOFD directors: nothing, which was recognized in the Special Districts section of the grand jury report.

Unless they start paying for their seats, Lamorinda elected officials will not be able to ease the public financial burden resulting from the coronavirus pandemic via their own salary adjustments.

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