

# Residents gather for peaceful protests amid pandemic



Photo Sophie Braccini

About 500 peaceful protesters came to the Moraga Commons park June 4.

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"There is a challenge that requires all of us to reach a little deeper into our sense of humanity," he said.

Noting that he had met with Police Chief Ben Alldritt and City Manager Niroop Srivatsa, Anderson said that the freedom of speech would be protected and would be ensured. To keep the community safe he said that the police would be increasing staffing, and that while people would be allowed to protest and assemble peacefully, violence and criminal activity such as was seen in Walnut Creek would not be tolerated.

"Let's go forward and try to be a beacon for our region and maybe even for the nation for how a community can in fact live together, work together and support each other everyday," said Anderson.

In a letter to the community Orinda Mayor Darlene Gee also expressed sadness and outrage at the murder of George Floyd and so many other victims of racial injustice, and in Moraga an official message from the town manager and the Chief of Police was issued via Nixle.

Protests continued to pop up across Lamorinda. One of the first was a car caravan May 31 from Acalanes High School.

News of the gathering spread by word-of-mouth, and within a short space of time the parking lot at the school was completely full, and still more cars were lining up to join in.

With signs and messages denouncing the killing of George Floyd and support for Black Lives Matter, the procession drove along Mt. Diablo Boulevard, entering Highway 24 on the west end of the town and ending up in Orinda Village where they were met with people carrying Black Lives Matter placards. As cars passed honking their horns, pedestrians showed support by clapping. More than 300

cars took part.

In Moraga, a large crowd of approximately 500, according to Moraga police department estimates, gathered at the Moraga Commons June 4 holding signs that read "Black Lives Matter," "Enough," "No Justice, No Peace," "Vote," among many others. Organized by Campolindo and Miramonte high school students, word of the protest expanded and residents of all ages, almost all masked, joined the peaceful protesters.

The two-and-a-half hour gathering opened with nearly nine minutes of silence, the amount of time Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who has been charged with second degree murder, pinned George Floyd to the ground on May 25 by pushing his knee into Floyd's neck.

The local protesters were reminded that they were living in a bubble where only 0.96% of the population is black and where prejudice is rampant. Reading off social media posts a Miramonte student illustrated the fact that racism is alive and well in Lamorinda. She called for a change in culture.

Gary Hill, a Moraga dad who is part of the 0.96% minority, said that seeing all the people coming to the Commons inspired him. He read a text he wrote called "Is it COVID or is it racism?" drawing a parallel between the two epidemics. Fear, uncertainty, fatigue, anger and death are, for Hill, common to both. There can be a vaccine to end COVID, but how to eradicate the other? Hill's recommendation is compassion, staying safe and making sure all others are as well, relating to each other's feelings and reaching out to those who are affected.

Gigi Crowder from the National Alliance on Mental Illness talked about Miles Hall, the 23-year-old black man who just a year ago suffered a mental breakdown and was shot and killed by the Walnut Creek police.



Photo Pippa Fisher

Protesters march up Mt. Diablo Boulevard June 7 in support of Black Lives Matter.



Photo Pippa Fisher

Cars gather at Acalanes May 31 ahead of a peaceful rally through Lafayette to Orinda.

Stereotypes and implicit biases were called out as something we all have and that police officers should be better trained.

Moraga police officers stood around the peaceful crowd without incident, mainly helping seniors cross Moraga Road when the gathering dismantled. Chief Jon King, who had posted on his department's website that he and his officers were all physically ill and disgusted by what they saw (the video of George Floyd's death), commented that the protest at the Commons was very well done, and that he was honored to be there to listen to the concern of the people in the community. He reached out to Crowder at the end of the gathering to discuss possible additional training for his officers.

There was a protest in Orinda June 6, and another much larger protest took place June 7 in Lafayette. The crowd of approximately 3,000 people squeezed onto Plaza Park to hear multiple speakers. Many more were crammed along both sides of Moraga Road and next to Safeway. A few Lafayette police officers, who kept a low profile during the event, kept the crowd spilling over onto Mt. Diablo Boulevard safe.

Several speakers, including Campolindo High School Counselor Patrick Turner, asked Lamorindans to imagine what it would be like to walk in their shoes, afraid for their lives when pulled over by police. They called for action and actual equality.

The event lasted over 3 hours and ended peacefully.

## Press Release

# Contra Costa to Reopen Outdoor Dining, Pools, Religious Services

**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY'S ROAD AHEAD FOR OUR COMMUNITY**

DATE	ACTIVITIES
JUNE 5	Outdoor dining, Outdoor swimming pools, Dog parks, Outdoor religious services, Overnight single family camping
JUNE 17	Hair salons, Barber shops
JULY 1	Indoor dining, Gyms & fitness centers, Limited indoor leisure (arcades, billiards, bowling alleys, etc.), Indoor museums, Hotels (for tourism & individual travel)
JULY/AUGUST	Schools, including primary, secondary & higher education (contact your local school district for start date)

**Not currently allowed by the state:** Nonessential healing arts (massage, etc.), Other personal services (personal training, tattoo, permanent makeup, piercing & nail salons), Movie theaters, Basketball courts, Playgrounds

**4 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE:** Social Distance, Cover Your Face, Enhance Hand Hygiene, Stay Home if Sick

These openings are a direct response to your patience and observation of the health order. We hope to continue opening up the county, but may need to reconsider openings based on the course of the pandemic.

Submitted by Candace Andersen, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

Contra Costa County residents may again enjoy outdoor swimming pools, outdoor seating at restaurants and dog parks under a new health officer order recently released.

The order, effective 5 p.m. June 5, also allows for outdoor religious services of up to 100 people, indoor religious services of up to 12 people, use of outdoor picnic and barbecue spaces, and overnight camping for people belonging to the same household.

Because of the progress made in the fight against COVID-19, Contra Costa health officers feel confident opening additional businesses and activities. The State of California has determined that while counties can move slower than state in reopening, they cannot move more quickly. The openings announced bring Contra Costa County in closer alignment to state guidelines. It also aligns with other Bay Area counties taking similar steps.

"We have made great progress slowing COVID-19 in our county," said Candace Andersen, chair of the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors. "I want to offer a heartfelt thank you to all who suffered and sacrificed to follow these health orders throughout this pandemic. I know it has not been easy. But you have helped save lives."

This order follows a modification earlier this week that allowed offices and many retail businesses to reopen and created guidance for small gatherings including people from different households.

Previous health orders requiring physical distancing and face coverings in public spaces remain in effect. Contra Costa residents should also continue to emphasize handwashing and other hygiene measures in their daily lives to reduce their risk of becoming infected.

"COVID-19 is still circulating in our community, and we need to take precautions to prevent outbreaks," said Dr. Chris Farnitano, the county health officer. "Another way we can keep ourselves and our families safe is to get tested, even if we feel well."

The new order includes guidance for safely conducting the newly permitted activities, including requirements for businesses. Details, including the full text of the order, are available at [cchealth.org/coronavirus](http://cchealth.org/coronavirus).