

Candidates begin to file for November election

By Sora O'Doherty

The terms of office of Orinda mayor Darlene Gee and city council member and former mayor Inga Miller will soon expire, and the Nov. 3 election will include those two four-year positions on the city council. Nominations will be accepted by the city clerk. Potential candidates should contact City Clerk Sheri Smith at ssmith@cityoforinda.org or (925) 253-4221 to schedule an appointment to take out and/or file nomination pa-

pers.

Lafayette has three council members whose term of office expires in November: Mayor Mike Anderson, and council members Cameron Burks and Steven Bliss. The candidate is responsible for the delivery of all signed original documents to the City Clerk Joanne Robbins. Due to COVID-19 city offices are open by appointment only. Nomination papers for city council candidates will be issued by appointment only. To schedule an appointment with City

Clerk Joanne Robbins call (925) 284-1968 or email jrobbins@ci.lafayette.ca.us

Moraga also had three council positions to fill: the terms of mayor Kymberleigh Korpus and council members Roger Wykle and Renata Sos expire in November.

Candidates must be 18 years of age or older, a citizen of the United States, and a resident and registered voter in the city/town. Candidates must also not be disqualified by the Constitution or laws of the state of California from

holding a civil office.

The nomination period is when individuals officially receive, circulate and file nomination papers for candidacy. The nomination period for candidates opened on July 13 and will close at 5 p.m. on Aug. 7. If an incumbent fails to submit nomination papers by Aug. 7, non-incumbent candidates will have until 5 p.m. on Aug. 12, to file nomination papers.

In addition to the councils, there are also members of the school boards whose

terms expire in November. In Orinda, OUSD board president Cara Hoxie and board member Hikary Weiner's terms will expire this year. Other school board members with terms that expire this year are, in Moraga, Vice President Jannelle Chng and board member Richard Severy; in Lafayette President Meredith Meade and member Susy Pak, and on the Acalanes Union High School board, members Kristin Connelly and Kathy Coppersmith.

Letters to the editor

Want a less divisive community? Create better communications.

Anyone else feel like practically every public issue lately has divided us? Whether it be a global pandemic, national and state issues, or local projects such as The Terraces of Deer Hill or even building a play structure at Leigh Creekside Park, we are all collectively up in arms on social media and at public meetings, often at the 11th hour.

Why is this? Frankly, from my view as a concerned resident, taxpayer and parent it's because of the lack of "customer"-centric communications by our government and the public agencies that serve us.

I finally say this now because of the highly disappointing experience with the Lafayette School District and its communications regarding reopening schools for the upcoming school year.

From new incoming families not being added to the school district email list until the actual start of the school year due to what was conveyed as "budgetary constraints" to governing board meeting information and the actual PDF document outlining the reopening options being hidden on a third-party website that you need to click EIGHT TIMES in order to get to (and that's if you know exactly how to get there), it's no wonder why parents feel frustrated and left out of the conversation.

These learnings also apply to our city government as well. I love Communications Analyst Jeff Heyman's Almost Daily Brief and Weekly Roundup, but these stories are usually after the fact. How many local residents know that they can sign up for email notifications for city council and commission agendas? Do

you even know where to sign up to receive them? And if you do get them, can you actually decipher what half of those agenda items are actually about?

Do our public agencies really want community involvement? Many times I really think not and I say that as a member of the Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission. We all need to do better.

If we make communication efforts more front and center and share information where our "customers" are, perhaps we'll have less infighting and less threat of litigation that could have been more easily prevented.

To be helpful, here are links where you can sign up for email notifications:

- City of Lafayette: www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/e-notification
- Lafayette School District: email scarman@lafsd.org
- Acalanes Union High School District: <https://bit.ly/3h3pA2Y>

Lauren McCabe Herpich
Lafayette

Council should vote yes on Terraces of Lafayette proposal

The Lafayette City Council's upcoming appeal vote on the Terraces of Lafayette proposal gives our town a chance to move past a decade of debate and commit to building a more inclusive community. The Council should seize the opportunity and vote to approve the project.

Lafayette's Planning Commission approved the project on July 1st after reviewing exhaustive research into the project's impacts on air quality, fire safety, traffic and emergency evacuations. California's Housing Accountability Act (HAA) requires that the city identify a "specific,

adverse impact upon the public health and safety" to deny the Terraces, and the Planning Commission found no such risk. Not only has the project been deemed safe by our local government, but its 63 affordable units will help address the affordable housing shortage and promote diversity in Lafayette. We live in the midst of a glaring housing crisis. Between 2010 and 2015, the Bay Area added just one housing unit for every six new jobs, far below the recommended rate of one unit for every 1.5 new jobs. Median housing prices have nearly doubled over the past decade, while high construction costs and regulatory burdens encourage developers to build expensive luxury units. The HAA, which was strengthened through amendments in 2017, aims to counteract these trends by offering legal protections for proposals like the Terraces that allocate at least 20% of their units for low-income residents.

State-level lawmakers strengthened the HAA in part because the housing crisis perpetuates inequality in California. Housing policies during the mid-20th century powered suburban

growth in the Bay Area that almost exclusively benefitted white families. Racist laws and lending practices prevented people of color from buying homes and building intergenerational wealth through home appreciation.

Even though the Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed explicitly racist housing policies, racial wealth and homeownership gaps persist. Nationally, the average black family's net worth is just over one tenth of the average white family's. Across the Bay Area, communities are more segregated now than in 1970; Lafayette is over 80% white.

While building more affordable housing won't suddenly make Lafayette diverse, it will improve accessibility for those who have been historically excluded.

The affordable housing segment planned for the Terraces project—63 units designated for low-income residents—doesn't

seem like much, but only 8 low-income units have been built in Lafayette since 2014. Approving the project would significantly increase our affordable housing stock. At the same time, rejecting the proposal would be fiscally risky: If the city council denies the project, Lafayette will probably lose millions of dollars to lawsuits. Judges have sided overwhelmingly with developers in cases related to the HAA.

Instead of fighting court battles Lafayette is unlikely to win, let's approve the Terraces and focus on making the project the best it can be for our community during design review. After approving this proposal, we can shift our attention towards encouraging future affordable developments that best fit our town's needs while demonstrating our commitment to equity.

Chris Mickas and Jeremy Levine
Inclusive Lafayette

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Schools to reopen online

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The days will have six periods only and include virtual academy at the beginning of each day. One system, Canvas, will replace School Loop and be the main portal for all.

In Lafayette, the adopted hybrid model also splits the student body in two groups A and B. Wednesdays are dedicated to students' independent online learning, while their teachers collaborate, are trained, or perform targeted intervention. The instruction would stop before lunch to minimize contacts. The online version would divide the week between synchronous and asynchronous online experience, with Wednesday being the day without live interaction.

In Orinda, the board decided to separate the elementary school children in morning and afternoon groups with Wednesday being their distance learning day. For the middle school, an original schedule was created combining an AM/PM model with instruction of only two subjects at a time for a three-week session. Each of the subjects, such as English and science, would be taught for three-hour blocks to the same cohort of students, thus minimizing the number of students teachers see each day in middle school. It is also Wednesday that was chosen as the remote learning day.

Moraga School District adopted a similar AM/PM hybrid model along a quarter rhythm for the middle school. Students will take three classes per quarter and will then

change classes for the next quarter. They will be separated in either morning or afternoon cohorts and will work online the rest of their day. This model is the only one that offers live instruction five days a week to every student. The model transfers to distance learning with students having three synchronous class instruction each day. The model proposed for the elementary school is one week in school, one week online five days a the week.

Many issues worry families; child care for working parents is a major concern. Schools have said that they would support families, but capacity this year will be less than last year. Models to decide who gets child care are still being debated. Those who need most hours could have priority, or could be essential workers' children, or a lottery could be organized. Staff also noted that often child care workers are over 55 years old and probably will not be eager to come back to work.

Several task force groups have worked on solutions for Special Ed children and ESL students who are likely to be most impacted by distance learning and hybrid models. Everything has been discussed from one-on-one online sessions to special in-person options with distance learning.

Moraga and Orinda planned to revisit their decision the week of July 20, as this paper went to press. Until numbers improve in the county, however, online learning will be the mode of education transmission.

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