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MOFD conducts wildland training exercises at Painted Rock in June.

Photo courtesy MOFD

High fire danger prompts new MOFD ordinance

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District bolstered its aggressive fire prevention program and took a major, unprecedented step to help reduce fire risk by passing a local ordinance banning open burning and recreational fires during periods of high fire danger.

“Every year, open burning, campfires, bonfires and recreational fires escape control and require an emergency response from fire agencies,” Fire Marshal Jeff Isaacs wrote in a staff report. “By restricting the time of year that open burning is allowed, we can reduce the threat to our community posed

by uncontrolled wildfire.”

The 2020 fire season is off to an ominous start. A 2-acre grass fire east of the Highway 24 Wilder off-ramp June 11 required a second alarm fire response. Over the Independence Day weekend, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District responded to 80 vegetation fires and 13 structure fires. And the following week, the spread of a vegetation fire in Moraga was slowed by previously completed fuel mitigation efforts.

Historically, the worst is on the way. Which is why the district board passed an urgency ordinance at its July 15 meeting to ban open burning and recreational fires during periods of high fire danger,

which the district considers as running from late July until the fall rains arrive.

“After attempts at education, the penalty will be \$500 for each day of violation,” Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said.

The prohibition does not apply to manufactured products such as gas barbecues or fire pits that comply with the district fire code, or to campfires on private lands with an MOFD-issued fire permit. Enclosed barbecues do not produce embers, the chief said, and flying embers are a major problem during periods of high fire danger.

The ordinance takes effect Aug. 15.

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COMPASS

Schools to reopen online; different hybrid models may follow

By Sophie Braccini

The recent spike of COVID-19 cases in Contra Costa County spurred many school districts to make the decision to reopen remotely, even before Gov. Gavin Newsom’s July 17 mandate was given to do so. Each of the four Lamorinda school districts have developed their own hybrid models for opening if the requisite reduction in infections in the county holds for a consecutive 14 days, and other factors trend positively.

The governor gave school districts the guidance they had all been asking for: as long as a county is on the state’s watch list, schools in that county won’t be permitted to reopen classrooms.

The Acalanes Union High School District made the decision July 14 to start the year online, and the Lafayette School District made the same decision July 15 on a split vote. Orinda Union School District on July 13 had decided to reopen using different hybrid models for elementary and middle school students, and during its study session on July 16 the Moraga School District was leaning toward distance learning.

Numerous parents at these meetings supported the idea of a hybrid model as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for the wellness of the children, and the federal recommendation to do so for economic reasons. Working parents stressed that they had to return to work and that finding supervision for their children would be difficult. Many also noted that most students did not learn efficiently

during the spring quarter, were depressed and demotivated.

But as superintendents and the governor noted, safety for children and staff comes first. When the Moraga School District polled its teaching staff, nearly 60% said they were ready to return to teaching in a hybrid model. Others either did not want to or could not return to campus. All districts noted that the need for additional substitute teachers would be a great concern with a hybrid model.

All the districts stressed the fact that online learning this time around will not be the same as what happen in the spring when staff had to pivot within a few days. They acknowledged that the spring had been far from optimal. This time would be different, they promised.

The tasks forces that have worked during the summer have chosen new models that will guarantee, according to them, the robust educational experience the governor is asking for.

Aida Glimme, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services at the AUHSD, explained that the district will comply with Bill 98 that requires that attendance be taken by teachers every day, that procedures be set in place if students are absent for more than 60% of instruction per week, and that live interaction (synchronous education) with teachers happen daily.

All districts also offer families the option of choosing the online platform FuelEd if they want to

keep their children off-site for a whole semester. That system offers a full integrated platform and teachers can personalize the content depending on their pedagogy.

The districts have worked hard at defining a hybrid model that can maximize instructional hours and minimize exposure of teachers, especially in middle and high school. At the beginning of the summer there were promises that the schedules would align among districts to make the life of families with children of different ages easier; but in the end, everyone claimed to have found the best solution for their stakeholders and they are all different from one another.

For all the high schools Monday will be a day of online learning for the students, and their teachers will have an afternoon of professional development. For the rest of the week, the periods will be shortened to one hour and 25 minutes with 15 minutes between classes to clean up and move. Students will be organized into two groups A and B - most likely alphabetically. Group A will attend class in person on Tuesday and Thursday and be online Wednesday and Friday. The opposite will be true for group B. The distance learning schedule will mirror this blended model, with shorter periods: one hour only, and Monday dedicated to asynchronous learning for students and development for teachers.

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BRANAGH



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2020 Art and Wine Festival canceled

By Pippa Fisher

Although it was probably inevitable, it wasn't official until July 7 when the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce issued a statement canceling this year's Art and Wine Festival in light of the growing number of new cases

of COVID-19 in the Bay Area and in the interest of health and safety.

Explaining that they had been "holding out for the miracle that just did not come in time," the statement said that canceling the event was the last thing they wanted.

Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson described losing the event as a

tough blow to the community, the businesses, the artists, and the guests that often total more than 80,000.

"The revenue generated helps pay for our valued community services (like Trick or Treat Street and our Rock the Plaza Concert Series) and has donated well over \$500K to the non-profit beneficiaries we sup-

port including our schools," Lifson said.

Meanwhile the Chamber has its sights set on next year's event. The 25th Annual Lafayette Art and Wine Festival is already on the calendar for Sept. 18 and 19, 2021.

Lafayette mayor to retire from council in November



Photo Jeff Heyman, city of Lafayette

Mayor Mike Anderson, pictured here with Vice Mayor Susan Candell at a December 2019 city council meeting, announced he will not run for re-election in November.

By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette's current longest-serving city council member has announced that he will not be running for re-election this November.

Mayor Mike Anderson made his intention clear at the July 13 city council meeting, describing his 16 years on the council as a 'half-Tatzin' – a reference to former Mayor Don Tatzin's 33 years on the council.

"It's been a great run," said Anderson.

Anderson has served the city for over 20 years. He was appointed to the planning commission in November 2000, and elected to the city council in November 2004.

All council members expressed their gratitude and sadness on hearing the news, described by City Council Member Steven Bliss as an

"immeasurable loss to our city council."

The city council has three four-year seats up for grabs in November. The filing period runs from July 13 to Aug. 7, with that date extended to Aug. 12 for seats for which the incumbent has not filed.

To be eligible, those interested in filing must be a citizen of the United States, at least 18 years of age, and be a registered voter and a qualified elector of the city of Lafayette. The candidate is responsible for delivering all signed original documents to City Clerk Joanne Robbins. Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, nomination papers will be issued by appointment only. Face masks and social distancing will be required.

To schedule an appointment with the city clerk call (925) 284-1968 or email jrobbins@ci.lafayette.ca.us

Terraces – next step, city council for decision

By Pippa Fisher

The Terraces' future has been escalated to the city council for a final decision.

City Council Member Cam Burks officially announced his appeal of the June 30 Planning Commission's decision to approve the Terraces land use project application, by email and at the council meeting July 13, coming

in under the two-week deadline to file an appeal.

"I believe that this project and decision is of such profound importance to the city and people of Lafayette, that it should be heard by the full, elected city council," said Burks.

Planning commissioners had voted 5-2 in favor of approving the project but not without voicing con-

cerns over traffic and safety issues in an emergency evacuation situation.

The controversial project for 315 apartments to be built on a 22-acre lot on Deer Hill Road includes 20 percent of the units offered as low-income housing and as such has protection under the Housing Accountability Act.

The city has two more allowable meetings on this project according to

state law. But it is likely that any decision on this case will wind up in legal action; litigation that according to the applicant's attorney could cost the city up to \$15.75 million if courts find the city acted in bad faith in denying the project.

City Manager Niroop Srivatsa said at the meeting she expected the council's hearing on the Terraces would take place in early August.

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Lamorinda School Bus program suspended

By Pippa Fisher

On top of the many stresses and uncertainties parents are facing during this coming school year, the news that the Lamorinda School Bus program is being suspended, is yet another challenge.

In a letter to parents, Lamorinda School Bus Program Manager Whitney Simon said it was with heavy heart that the bus service would be suspended until further notice; a decision Simon says was not made lightly.

Specific state guidelines for school buses during the pandemic require the need for reduced seating capacity in order to practice safe social distancing, and that an aide be assigned to all buses to ensure students abide by the distancing and to conduct symptom screenings. Typically there are 36 students per route with some of the middle school routes at 58 students per bus. The new regulations

would reduce that number to a maximum of 14 students per bus, which says Simon, is financially unfeasible.

Furthermore Contra Costa Transportation Authority has notified the program, which is funded by 60% from the county's Measure J sales tax revenue, and by 40% from parents' fees, that it will receive a 16.5% reduction in funding due to a loss in sales tax revenues. This combined with reduction in ridership and the cost of paying for additional aides makes providing the service impracticable until health orders allow such guidelines to be removed.

While local schools will likely begin with remote learning, they may return to a hybrid model offering some in-person classes, and Simon says she is working to explore the availability of online resources for families to connect with other families in their class cohorts to develop carpools and hopes to reach out to parents soon with a survey.

Lazy days of summer, with some restrictions



The signs are a reminder that even here, it is not exactly "back to usual"

Photo Pippa Fisher

By Pippa Fisher

If it weren't for all the walkers and joggers sporting facemasks, one might think that all is back to normal at the Lafayette Reservoir.

And to some degree it is. Both the outer rim and the lower paved trails are open. The crowds are back as usual on these summer mornings before the heat builds. Fishermen can be spotted on the banks enjoying the peace of the Res. Officials are monitoring and enforcing parking rules.

But the visitors' center is closed. The boats remain docked,

and the playground areas are taped off and closed. Private boat launching, barbecues, and picnic tables are all unavailable. Water fountains are off-limits apart from four located around the paved trail and only selected restrooms are open.

Meanwhile the rangers are happy to see folks back enjoying the beautiful space. They say mostly people are cooperating with social distancing and facemask-wearing requirements.

And until restrictions are loosened, that's the plan - wear a mask and keep your six-foot distance.



Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Wednesday, July 27, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel:
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Planning Commission Meeting

Wednesday, Aug. 3, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Don Tatzin Community Hall

Design Review

Wednesday, July 27, 7 p.m. Lafayette Library & Learning Center. 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Arts & Science Discovery Room



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Total Homes Sold	290	113
Average Price Sold	\$1,788,877	\$1,798,603
Highest Price Sold	\$5,850,000	\$4,495,000
Lowest Price Sold	\$540,000	\$890,000

Moraga

	2019	2020 (Year To Date)
Total Homes Sold	129	64
Average Price Sold	\$1,486,336	\$1,613,630
Highest Price Sold	\$2,805,000	\$2,700,000
Lowest Price Sold	\$925,000	\$900,000

Orinda

	2019	2020 (Year To Date)
Total Homes Sold	259	106
Average Price Sold	\$1,628,161	\$1,793,168
Highest Price Sold	\$4,850,000	\$5,600,000
Lowest Price Sold	\$570,000	\$785,000

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COMPASS

Town of Moraga and EBMUD reach landslide remediation plan agreement

By Vera Kochan

The town council unanimously passed a resolution approving a settlement agreement with East Bay Municipal Utility District regarding the remediation of a landslide that occurred on EBMUD property in April 2017. The July 8 decision also allows for the protection of the Canyon Road Bridge.

The landslide had caused structural damage to the original bridge initiating its closure and the installation of the temporary bridge. In Oc-

tober 2017, the town filed with EBMUD a claim for damages which EBMUD denied in January 2018.

Both parties engaged in three years of negotiations before Town Attorney Michelle Marchetta Kenyon and EBMUD's general counsel finalized a proposed settlement agreement resolving all claims related to the landslide and the construction of a new retaining wall.

According to the Settlement Agreement, EBMUD has three options regarding construction of the retaining wall. Option 1 is to build a full

Retaining Wall System, consistent with a \$3 million grant EBMUD has applied for from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Option 2 is to "build a shorter segment to protect the Town Bridge (Bridge Segment)." Finally, Option 3 would be to "pay the Town its estimated costs for the Town to build its own retaining wall to protect the Canyon Road Bridge (Town Stitch Wall)."

If EBMUD chooses either Options 1 or 2, it has no later than Dec. 1 to inform the town whether it will construct the RWS or Bridge Seg-

ment. By Feb. 1, 2021, EBMUD must complete and submit bid documents to the town for approval, allowing for bids to be put out no later than March 15. A construction contract must be awarded by April 30, 2021.

On the chance that EBMUD chooses Option 3, it must pay the town to build a stitch wall whose estimated costs for design and construction are \$757,000, plus any documented excess costs up to \$75,700 (10% contingency).

The parties also entered into a Letter Agreement whereby EBMUD agreed to

pay the town \$105,000 to assist with designs for a town constructed retaining wall which will be credited against any future payments.

Both the town and EBMUD note that the solution will pave the way for reestablishing the segment of the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail that was closed at the bridge site after the landslide occurred. Earlier this year, EBMUD reached a \$3.67 million settlement agreement with the homeowners on Augusta Drive whose residences were impacted by the landslide.

Chase Bank opens in Moraga



New Chase Bank in Moraga

Photo Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

It's been nearly 18 months since Chase Bank first broke ground in Moraga. The new location at 1299 School Street in the Moraga Shopping Center had a soft opening July 7 due to the current landscape involving coronavirus restrictions.

Branch Manager Cora Mopera stated, "I'm glad to have a footprint in the Moraga community." Even without much if any fanfare, Mopera was excited to welcome the first trickle of current customers eager to transfer to this branch from other locations or potential new clients.

With roots tracing back to 1799,

Chase operates as a leading national bank in the United States. The banking chain has more than 5,500 branches and 17,000 ATMs across the U.S.

Chase Bank offers a wide range of consumer and commercial banking services, such as checking and savings accounts, lending guidance and investment services. Additionally, CHASE offers credit cards, mortgage offices and mobile banking.

Each year, Chase earns more than \$58 billion in sales and is considered a massive company in the banking industry employing over 240,000 associates nationwide while operating as a subsidiary of JPMorgan Chase, a publicly held company.

Town experiences increase in coyote activity

By Vera Kochan

One of the more recent coyote sightings occurred July 9 near the Moraga Commons Park restrooms, when a 2-year-old boy was bitten on the leg by what was reportedly a coyote. The toddler was in the company of a caregiver at the time. According to Moraga Police Department Lt. Brian South, "The child was treated and released that same day with non-life threatening

injuries."

MPD closed the Commons Park early the following evening out of an abundance of caution due to coyote activity becoming more prevalent beginning at dusk. The park reopened July 11 at regular hours.

However, later that evening, around 7:45 p.m., more coyote activity was reported in the Rimer Drive area of Moraga. A small coyote was spotted approaching

an individual on foot and then running toward a bicyclist. There were no injuries reported, and the animal was spotted running away to a nearby orchard.

"Coyote sightings are historically not unusual in Moraga," stated South. "Since the bite incident, sightings have occurred and residents have been sharing their observations of coyote activity in various areas of town. We have been working with the Cali-



Photo Vera Kochan

The reported July 9 coyote attack occurred near the Moraga Commons Park restrooms.

fornia Department of Fish and Wildlife and sharing this information with them."

A man visiting Moraga Country Club was bitten on the leg July 17, but he didn't see the animal and it was unknown if it was a coyote. The man was treated for minor injury at a local hospital, according to South.

There has been an increase in wild animal sightings across the Bay Area since the coronavirus pandemic began. "When humans retreat, due to lockdowns and stay-at-home orders, the landscape of fear that we create retreats with us," explained ecologist John Laundre of Western Oregon University in Monmouth. "Animals common in suburban areas, such as coyotes, might normally restrict their activi-

ties to the evening and night. But, the fewer people they see around, the more willing they are to come out during the day."

CDFW recommends residents to "stash your food and trash." Keep garbage cans closed, remove all sources of water, bring pets in at night, pick up fallen fruit and cover compost piles. Added precautions include to never feed a coyote, do not leave small children unattended, install motion-sensitive lighting, and trim hiding places such as ground level shrubbery. If followed by a coyote, make loud noises or throw rocks in the animal's direction. If attacked, contact MPD at (925) 284-5010 or call 911.

Lt. South can be reached at: south@moraga.ca.us



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Town Council

Wednesday, Aug. 26, 7 p.m.

Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Planning Commission: Monday, Aug. 3, 7 p.m.

Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Park and Recreation Commission: Tuesday, Aug. 18 7 p.m., Council

Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Moraga School District Board Meetings:

Special Board Meeting Tuesday, Aug. 11, 6 p.m.

www.moraga.k12.ca.us.

See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Community Cup fundraiser helps COVID-19 affected businesses



Photo provided

Lindsey Lonergan, Community Cup originator

By Vera Kochan

Almost one month into the shelter-in-place mandate Moraga Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kathe Nelson was contacted by Lindsey Lonergan, a junior at San Ramon Valley High School, who originated a fundraising idea dubbed Community Cup.

"My daily routine changed drastically overnight," said Lonergan. "One of the things I realized that was different was that I wasn't going to buy coffee. During the school week, I'd get a cup at least three times a week, and I realized that I wasn't spending this money anymore, because I was staying at home."

Lonergan heard that many businesses in her hometown of Danville were struggling, and other members of the community wanted to do something to help. "Community Cup gave people a platform so they could donate their 'cup of coffee' to these businesses,"

Lonergan said. "I partnered with our chamber of commerce, because I figured they had a better idea of who was most in need. I came up with the name because the fundraiser involved my community and the price of a cup of coffee. When put together, I thought Community Cup had a nice ring to it."

According to Nelson, "After presentation to the board, the Chamber felt that this was a good way to offer at least a little financial assistance to our local businesses, as the Town of Moraga has no economic development funds or silos of money that could offer financial aid." Nelson added, "Danville and Pleasanton Chambers were already on board with the program and doing well."

Lonergan's Danville Community Cup to date has raised \$6,745 (far surpassing her initial goal of \$1,500). Seeing the success of her pilot program, along with others in the Bay Area, she hopes to see her fundraiser idea spread nationwide.

"Small businesses have been greatly affected by COVID-19," stated Nelson. "Our local shops and services have been there to assist us. Now it's our time to help them by participating in Community Cup. All money raised will go directly to the Moraga Chamber of Commerce which, through a grant format, will aid our local shops with on-site improvements."

Each business must fill out an application in addition to providing a one-page background of the establishment with information regarding the direct impact of COVID-19 on the company and how the grant funds will be used. The maximum allocation of funds per business is \$500. All receipts will be audited by the chamber board. The application form and GoFundMe donation page are both located on the chamber's website: www.moragachamber.org.

Pending application approval, the Moraga Chamber expects to begin fund distributions on Aug. 1 and continue to the end of the year or as long as people donate. Nelson notes that 100% of the donated funds will go directly to businesses in need.

Already two local small businesses have turned in applications to Community Cup. Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe hopes to replace the lights in the store, which are old and dim making it more difficult to see the range of products for sale on the shelves. Amabile School of Music, a recently established business in town, is paying rent for a space they are not yet allowed to reopen. When they do, they would like to

use the funds to purchase masks, protection shields and UV lights.

"Overall, I am so grateful and impressed by, not just my community, but everyone who has contributed," praised Lonergan. "In a time

where we need to keep our distance, community is what connects us together. Every person who has donated, spread the word, or reached out has made such an impact in the lives of others."

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Planning Commission approves Countryhouse Memory Care over bitter Wilder objections



Revised west elevation

Image provided

By Sora O'Doherty

Despite threats of costly litigation, the Orinda Planning Commission unanimously approved an application to build a memory care facility at 1 Wilder Rd. Wilder residents voiced almost unanimous objections to the facility, but planning commission chair Brandyn Iverson took them to task for what she termed a “gotcha” attack on the facility over the issue of kitchens. Objectors have 10

days from the approval to file appeals. Any appeal would be adjudicated by the Orinda City Council.

The approved project consists of 38 assisted living units in a one- to two-story, 32,084-square-foot congregate care facility. The project has been in the works for years, and as changes have been made by the developer to try to garner approval, the plans have changed. Originally, the facility would have provided both memory care and long-term care units, but as the plan developed it has been limited to memory care units only. The facility is what is known as a congregate care facility.

For a memory care facility, the plans hit a snag over the Orinda Municipal Code definition of a congregate care residential facility, which requires that each small unit must contain “a small kitchen allowing for independent living but also provides common dining, housekeeping, recreational and social facilities.” It is not safe, however, for memory care residents to have access to cooking facilities. The developer therefore amended the plans to add a small kitchen to each unit, but also to provide that the kitchen would only be accessible to staff or guests, but not to the residents themselves. Shona Armstrong, attorney for the Wilder Owners Association, both submitted extensive written comments and also spoke at the July 14 meeting, alleging that the approval of the facility is not legally possible because the plan controverts the city’s zoning code, as well as California codes. Armstrong states that California regulations governing memory care facilities actually prohibit kitchens in units, specifically the accessibility of heating devices to residents with dementia.

Armstrong also voiced the WOA’s other objections to the follow-up actions on the Dec. 10, 2019 planning commission meeting, including the update as to the emergency medical services report and revised traffic studies, the 3D modeling of the project, and the update on visual night sky studies. In addition Armstrong highlighted perceived difficulties with the significant special taxes paid by Wilder owners to refund bonds issued to create the Community Facilities District and the special assessment district levy to fund the Geological Hazards District. Armstrong’s correspondence, as well as other written comments on the memory care facility, are accessible on the city’s website.

Another attorney at the meeting stated that she was “very concerned about the city of Orinda’s viable defense.” She suggested that the city is “legally vulnerable,” and that the city’s budget will get hit by multiple lawsuits. Other objections raised issues that had already been aired at previous meetings on the facility, including the impact of the facility on Wilder’s potential evacuation during an emergency and general traffic objections. Objections were presented to the commission by many Wilder owners, including Ben Zarin, Brian Parks, Kyle Arteaga, Kathy Finch, S.K. Gupta, Scott Honeychurch, Chris Shen, Roxanne Christophe, and Mark Bresnik. A number of the objectors also attended the later Wilder Subcommittee meeting on July 16 to restate their objections to both the memory care facility and a preschool the planning commission approved for the Art & Garden Center (see story Page A7).

Although the majority of comments at the meeting

were in opposition to the project, there were also several commenters who strongly support the project, including former mayor and current president of the Orinda Community Foundation, Sue Severson, who praised the record of developer, Agemark, owned by Richard Weston, who along with his son Forest are Orinda residents. Weston attended the meeting, but left the defense of the project to Emmanuel Ursu, former Orinda planning director, who is a member of the applicant’s team. Fran Layton, an attorney for Orinda, also defended the project, saying that the proposal regarding kitchens “is absolutely consistent with Orinda’s Code.”

The applicant’s presentation to the planning commission included a three-dimensional video that showed the facility as it would appear from all approaches from Wilder Road and from Highway 24. Many of the objectors were vehemently opposed to the fact that the facility will be visible from Highway 24, citing the importance of the city’s “scenic highway.” The video can be viewed as part of the recording of the July 14 meeting available on the city’s website.

Other responses to the planning commission’s earlier comments by the developer included specifics of night sky compliant lighting, which the planning commission reduced substantially, and additional details on the rear of the facility that faces Highway 24. The developer also paid for additional traffic and safety studies, which concluded that the facility would increase traffic on Wilder Road by only 1% and would not present a hazard in the event of an emergency evacuation of the Wilder development.

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Orinda Public Meetings
City Council
 Tuesday, July 28, 7:15 p.m.
 Regular Meeting
 By Teleconference Only
Planning Commission
 Tuesday, July 28, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only
Finance Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting
 Thursday, Aug. 26, 6:30 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only

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Outcry over proposed trail staging area, preschool in Art & Garden Center at Wilder

By Sora O'Doherty

As the Orinda city council's Wilder Subcommittee met to review whether or not the developers are meeting the requirements for the end of 2020, Wilder residents attended the video meeting to express continued objections to the trail staging area as well as to reiterate objections to the Orinda planning commission's approval two days earlier of the Countryhouse Memory Care facility and a preschool to operate out of the Art & Garden Center.

The subcommittee is composed of Vice Mayor Amy Worth and Council Member Nick Kosla. The city is also represented by attorney Fran Layton, who also attended the meeting.

The Red-Tailed Hawk staging area located at the far end of the Wilder development was originally the proposed site of the Art and Garden Center, and the intent was to draw the public into the valley, as the amenities included in the development

agreement are intended to be for all Orinda residents as well as the public. However, earlier changes in the plans resulted in the Art and Garden Center being moved closer to the entrance to Wilder, adjacent to the four playing fields. The subcommittee agreed to discuss the issue but to postpone action until more information could be gathered.

The staging area is intended to provide some amenities, such as toilets and parking, to members of the public who wish to access the trail that begins at the foot of the valley. However, Wilder residents have been complaining that the area, even before development, is being used for illegal activities, including vandalism and graffiti, illegal parking and overnight camping. Orinda Police Chief David Cook also attended the meeting to address these concerns.

Mary Jo Ashby, chair of the Secure Wilder Committee, reported on specific incidents of graffiti, trespassing and al-

cohol use, as well as disturbances of the peace, loud parties with beer kegs, and bonfires. Another serious incident involved the lock on the emergency vehicle road gate used by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District being cut off and replaced with a private lock. Incidents have also been reported in the adjacent neighborhood of Lost Valley, which included vandalism of the PG&E substation, public urination, and alcohol use. Citing the installation of the trailhead as "a hazard to our community," Ashby recommended that the city council eliminate the trailhead altogether.

Cook told the subcommittee that all of the trails have seen an increase in unwanted activity. He said that the police will try to enforce the law and urged Wilder residents to report incidents, especially if they can report the incident while it is actually happening, to allow the police to respond. He urged them not to feel like they are a burden, but are actually welcome assistance to

the force.

"I absolutely share the concerns of the Wilder Residents," Cook said. "The behavior out there is absolutely inappropriate; there is no way this should continue." He added that he is going to get East Bay Parks involved. Cook reported a total of 96 calls over the past three months for Wilder and the Edgewood neighborhood of Lost Valley, including a lot of suspicious vehicles, one theft from a porch and 17 ordinance violations, all of which involved use of the fields. There was also one misdemeanor assault reported.

Cook said that the department has contacted parents, trying to get cooperation. OPD will call on the East Bay Park Region to do investigations. OPD cannot send officers out into the hills, Cook said, as they don't have 4-wheel drive vehicles. Worth agreed that there are a lot of demands on Orinda's two officers per shift. Cook said that the OPD tries to get up there a couple of times

through each rotation. "I want to be proactive," he said. "It helps if Wilder residents are willing to call. If we have data points, we can target specific areas, specific times or days," he explained.

Bruce Yamamoto of Brook Street, the main developer at Wilder, reported on the progress of the trailhead, as well as the progress on other Wilder projects that are due to be completed by the end of the year, such as the sidewalks in the development. Currently signage is being prepared for the trailhead staging area and the site is being prepared for future construction. Yamamoto said that the bathroom provider is moving forward on permitting, storm drains, and the concrete pad for bathrooms. If everything progresses without a hitch, which Kosla joked never happens, the constructions could be completed by the middle of September.

... continued on Page A8

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The racial and gender makeup of the Lamorinda fire agencies

By Nick Marnell

Results are mixed as to how Lamorinda fire agencies compare to national and local demographics when it comes to diversity in the workplace.

According to a February report issued by the National Fire Protection Association, 370,000 career firefighters were employed in the U.S. in 2018. Between 2015 and 2018, 4% of the career firefighters were female, 8% African American, 8% Hispanic or Latino and 1% Asian. NFPA figures are the result of its survey of U.S. fire agencies and should not be interpreted as an industry standard.

An analysis of district personnel records as of mid-June shows that the Moraga-Orinda Fire District measures up in three of the national

categories, falling short in the U.S. rate of Black suppression personnel.

But in the communities it serves, the district exceeds the local ratio with its percentage of African American personnel on the front line. In the two major municipalities under district jurisdiction, using the latest U.S. Census Bureau data, Black residents total 1.9% of the population, while MOFD reports a 4% African American workforce.

The opposite is true with MOFD and Asian personnel. Though it clobbers the national rate with 4% Asian firefighters, the district falls behind the 16% Asian population of Orinda and Moraga.

The district is slightly ahead of the U.S. rates of female firefighters at 5%. And it employs Hispanic firefighters

at an 11% rate, higher than both the U.S. average and the 4.5% local population rate.

“MOFD is committed to diversity and continues to seek applicants from all backgrounds to provide the best possible service to our community,” Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said.

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District lists its suppression personnel as 6.4% Asian and 13% Hispanic, above the national average in each category, but below the national averages with 5% Black and 2.7% female firefighters.

A comparison of ConFire numbers to the demographics of Lafayette – 1% African American, 12% Asian, 8% Hispanic – bears results similar to those of MOFD. However, district firefighters ro-

tate among all 27 ConFire companies throughout the county, and only three of those companies lie in Lafayette.

“ConFire is committed to recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining the best and most qualified professionals

possible to provide the emergency services our residents expect,” Fire Chief Lewis Broschard said. “While doing this, we are also committed to building and maintaining a workforce that reflects the unique diversity of the communities we serve.”

Fire District Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday,
Aug. 19, 7 p.m.
Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org



ConFire

Board of Directors
Tuesday, Aug. 11, 1:00 p.m.
Board Chamber Room 107,
Administration Building
651 Pine St., Martinez.
For meeting times and agendas, visit www.cccfd.org



MOFD comes down hard on fire code violators



Goats can be one solution to abate weeds.

Photo Pippa Fisher

By Nick Marnell

Owners of eight district parcels found out the hard way that the largesse of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District has its limits when it comes to exterior hazard abatement requirements.

Fire district officials have emphasized an educational outreach to residents, as property owners worked to

comply with the district fire code and abate problem vegetation by the middle of June. Parcel owners were sent an informational postcard in April reminding them of the deadline and after June 15, property inspections began.

Having found major fire code violations on their properties, MOFD mailed owners of 13 parcels a Notice to Abate on June 19. Five of those

owners either completed the work required or requested an extension from the district. The eight who ignored the notices were warned that their refusal to adhere to the fire code would result in an abatement hearing before the district board and they ignored that as well.

“People have counted on blowing us off,” Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said.

Those days are over.

The eight parcels cited were large, unimproved and unmaintained properties overcome with wild vegetation. At the July 15 abatement hearing, the MOFD board unanimously voted to declare each of the eight properties a seasonal and recurring nuisance, and ordered the fire chief to abate the properties.

“The absence of a cooperative owner makes it very difficult for us to work toward the voluntary compliance that is always our goal,” Win-

nacker said.

The district will hire a contractor to abate the properties and then send the owners a bill for the work. If the owners refuse to pay, the district will file a lien on their property with the county. The abatement costs are not cheap, with some properties possibly exceeding \$10,000 in contractor charges.

With the increase in the number and ferocity of California wildfires, and the major push by residents to increase district fire prevention efforts, MOFD is allowing no slack in adherence to the fire code.

“Property owners in Moraga, Orinda and Canyon should be put on notice by this,” President Steven Danziger said. “This was just the first, and you can expect to see more of these hearings. We are serious about property owners mitigating their properties.”

Outcry over proposed trail staging area

... continued from Page A7

Wilder residents also were critical of a plan approved by the planning commission July 14 to allow

Orinda Parks and Recreation to lease out a portion of the Art and Garden Center to a preschool for a period of three years, which involves fencing off the tot lot play

area. Parks and Rec Director Todd Trimble responded to questions, including whether or not the preschool would allow drop-off access via the Emergency Vehicle Access off

of Bigleaf Road. Both Trimble and Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Works Larry Theis emphasized that drop-off and pickup of preschool children was to be

done from the playfields parking lot and that the EVA would be closed off by a six-foot locked gate.

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Chief of Police, Ben Alldritt

925-299-3221

Police Department Tip Line

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Police Department Traffic Issues

94549Traffic@gmail.com

Moraga Police Department:

329 Rheem Blvd., 925-888-7055

Chief of Police, Jon King ext. 7049

Orinda Police Department:

22 Orinda Way 925-254-6820

Chief of Police, David M. Cook

925-254-6820

Orindatip@cityoforinda.org

Lafayette Police

Department

Incident

Summary

Report

June 28 - July 11

Alarms	53
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	15
Traffic	83
Suspicious Circumstances	11
Suspicious Subject	29
Suspicious Vehicle	16
Service to Citizen	41
Patrol Req./Security Check	39
Public/School Assembly Check	1
Supplemental Report	29
Vacation House Check	11
Welfare Check	11
Ordinance Violation	1
Vehicle violations	
Abandoned Vehicle	
1400 Block Sunset Loop	
3600 Block Chestnut St.	
Animal Control Call	
Brown Ave./Deer Hill Rd.	
Animal Cruelty	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Animal Services Call	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Eb Sr 24	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Nb 1680 At Ygnacio Valley Rd., Wcr	
Moraga Rd./Wilkinson Ln.	
3200 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Petty Theft From Vehicle	
3200 Block Rohrer Dr.	
900 Block Hough Ave.	
3200 Block Camino Colorados	
3200 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Reckless Driving	
Hamlin Rd./Solana Dr.	
Happy Valley Rd./Soares Ln.	
Mt. Diablo Blvd./Moraga Rd.	
500 Block Michael Ln.	



500 Block Michael Ln.	
500 Block Silverado Dr.	
Stolen Vehicle Recovery	
Sierra Vista Way/Crescenta Ct.	
Other criminal activity	
Commercial Burglary	
3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Fraud False Pretenses	
900 Block Risa Rd.	
Grand Theft	
1700 Block Reliez Valley Rd.	
30 Block Lafayette Cir.	
1000 Block 2Nd St.	
Identity Theft	
1000 Block 2Nd St.	
10 Block Shreve Ln.	
1000 Block 2Nd St.	
3300 Block Springhill Rd.	
1000 Block 2Nd St.	
900 Block Reliez Station Rd.	
Police Department	
10 Block Westminster Pl	
Misc Burglary	
3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Petty Theft	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
700 Block Old Jonas Hill Rd.	
3700 Block Happy Valley Rd.	
3700 Block Happy Valley Rd.	
1400 Block Rancho View Dr.	
1100 Block Perales St.	
Petty Theft Bicycle	
900 Block Risa Rd.	
Petty Theft Other	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Robbery Strongarm	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Shoplift	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Warrant Arrest	
900 Block Moraga Road	
Warrant Service	
700 Block Tanglewood Ln.	
Nuisance to the Community	
Disturbance-domestic	
900 Block Risa Rd.	
3500 Block Terrace Way	
1000 Block Dewing Ave.	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Loud Music	
1000 Block Cavallero Ln.	
1000 Block Cavallero Ln.	
Hillview Ln./Quandt Rd.	
Loud Noise	
3500 Block Powell Dr.	
3300 Block Springhill Rd.	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Springhill Rd.	
3100 Block Plymouth Rd.	
3800 Block Happy Valley Rd.	
10 Block Arbor Way	
Loud Party	
1000 Block Lindsey Ct.	
3100 Block Plymouth Rd.	
3100 Block Plymouth Rd.	
Public Nuisance	
Silverwood Dr./Cabernet Ct	
3600 Block Happy Valley Rd.	
Vandalism	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
200 Block St Marys Rd.	
1800 Block Reliez Valley Rd.	
3600 Block Deerrhill Rd.	
900 Block Mountain View Dr.	
Other	
Fireworks	
3600 Block Mosswood Dr.	

900 Block Dolores Dr.	
900 Block Mountain View Dr.	
3400 Block School St.	
Hastings Ct./Hilltop Dr.	
Huntleigh Dr./Lucas Dr.	
600 Block Huntleigh Dr.	
3900 Block Happy Valley Rd.	
1300 Block Sunset Loop	
Glenside Dr./Augustine Ln.	
600 Block Huntleigh Dr.	
Happy Valley Rd./Rose Ln.	
1200 Block Pleasant Hill Rd.	
Bacon Way/Springbrook Rd.	
K9 Outside Assist Request	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Deer Hill Rd.	
600 Block Thornhill Rd., Dan	
Loitering	
3100 Block Plymouth Rd.	
Trespass	
900 Block Diablo Dr.	
3600 Block Deer Hill Rd. (2)	
Oak Hill Rd./Deer Hill Rd.	
3300 Block Silver Springs Ct.	
Deer Hill Rd./Oak Hill Rd.	
1000 Block Hunsaker Canyon Rd.	
900 Block Moraga Rd.	
1500 Block Rancho View Dr.	
Unwanted Guest	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Violation Custody Order	
3300 Block Moraga Blvd.	
1200 Block Warner Ct.	
Violation Restraining Ord	
1200 Block Warner Ct.	

Moraga Police

Department

Incident

Summary

Report

June 30 - July 13

Alarms	13
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	12
Traffic	18
Suspicious Circumstances	8
Suspicious Subject	5
Suspicious Vehicle	8
Service to Citizen	49
Patrol Req./Security Check	15
Supplemental Report	14
Vacation House Check	0
Welfare Check	1
Vehicle violations	
Auto Burglary	
Moraga Royale Retirement Home	
Excessive Speed	
Arco Station Moraga	
Moraga Rd/St Marys Rd., Laf.	
24 Hour Fitness	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	
Cvs	
Petty Theft From Vehicle	
Moraga Commons Park	
Reckless Driving	
Camino Ricardo/Greenfield Dr.	
Larch Ave./Camino Pablo	
Vehicle Theft	
10 Block Madsen Ct.	
Not Available	
2000 Block Donald Dr.	
700 Block Augusta Dr.	
Other criminal activity	
Burglary	
10 Block Fleuti Dr.	
Commercial Burglary	
1400 Block Moraga Way	



Petty Theft	
Augusta/St. Andrews	
Moraga Country Club	
Shoplift	
Cvs	
Warrant Arrest	
90 Block Devin Dr.	
Nuisance to the Community	
Disturbance-domestic	
Not Available	
Disturbing The Peace	
Rancho Laguna Park	
Loud Music	
200 Block Rheem Blvd.	
Ivy Dr./Moraga Way	
Campolindo High School	
Loud Noise	
Not Available	
200 Block Ivy Pl.	
Public Nuisance	
300 Block Calle La Montana	
Other	
Accident Property	
10 Block Hetfield Pl.	
200 Block Scofield Dr.	
Beat Info	
Redwood Hw/Pinehurst Rd.,	
Canyon	
1400 Block Camino Pablo	
Extortion	
Police Department	
Fireworks	
Camino Pablo/Corte Maria	
3900 Block Campolindo Dr.	
Bayside Way/Waterford Way,	
Oak.	
1000 Block Country Club Dr.	
1200 Block Larch Ave.	
1900 Block Ascot Dr.	
20 Block Hardie Dr.	
10 Block Madsen Ct.	
Harassment	
Not Available	
Safeway	
50 Block Ascot Pl.	
Mentally Ill Commit	
School St./Moraga Way	
400 Block Millfield Pl.	
Ordinance Violation	
Hardie Dr./Moraga Way	
Seven Eleven	
300 Block Rheem Blvd.	
Public Assembly Check	
Rheem Valley Shopping Center	
Threats	
300 Block Calle La Montana	
10 Block Del Rio Ct.	
Campolindo High School	

Welfare Check	3
Ordinance Violation	6
Vehicle violations	
Dui Misdemeanor	
40 Block La Cuesta Rd.	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	
10 Block Valley Dr.	
500 Block Tahos Rd.	
500 Block Tahos Rd.	
Beverages And More	
10 Block Camino Pablo	
Reckless Driving	
Camino Pablo/Orinda Way	
Rite Aid	
Greenbrook Dr./Century Way,	
Dan	
Moraga Way/El Corte	
Tc - Property Damage	
500 Block Tahos Rd.	
Other criminal activity	
Computer Fraud	
10 Block Lloyd Ln.	
Grand Theft	
Beverages And More	
St Stephens Dr./Tahos Rd.	
Petty Theft	
Rite Aid	
Petty Theft From Vehicle	
50 Block Brookside Rd.	
Residential Burglary	
10 Block Wanda Ln.	
Robbery	
Bank Of America	
Shoplift	
Rite Aid	
Nuisance to the Community	
Disturbance-domestic	
Claremont Ave./Camino Pablo	
Disturbing The Peace	
Beverages And More	
100 Block Ardith Ct.	
Loud Music	
10 Block La Fond Ln.	
Loud Noise	
50 Block Underhill Rd.	
10 Block La Fond Ln.	
Vandalism	
400 Block Camino Sobrante	
Other	
Accident Fatal	
20 Block Whitehall Dr.	
Accident Injury	
100 Block Canon Dr.	
Accident Property	
Safeway	
Dependent Adult Abuse	
10 Block Las Piedras	
Fireworks	
Orinda Intermediate School	
100 Block El Toyonal	
400 Block El Toyonal	
Lombardy Ln./Van Ripper Ln.	
Brookwood Rd./Camino Pablo	
Glorietta Blvd./Overhill Rd.	
20 Block Robert Rd.	
Ivy Dr./Crown Ct.	
10 Block Bates Blvd.	
10 Block Estates Dr.	
Orinda Intermediate School	
Public Assembly Check	
Cvs	
10 Block Camino Sobrante	
Bevmo	
Bevmo	



Orinda Police Department

Incident Summary Report

June 28 - July 11

Alarms	41
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	10
Traffic	19
Suspicious Circumstances	2
Suspicious Subject	6
Suspicious Vehicle	8
Service to Citizen	67
Patrol Req./Security Check	87
Supplemental Report	18

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

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters must be factually accurate and be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. Email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Schools to reopen online

... continued from Page A1

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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Crunching Lamorinda's COVID-19 numbers

By Sora O'Doherty

As levels of Covid-19 infections are again rising, residents of Lamorinda are trying to assess their risk of contracting the potentially deadly disease, but obtaining clear numbers limited to Lamorinda is difficult if not impossible. COVID-19 data is collected at the county, state and federal levels, and is published on the internet. However, there is little local breakdown of the numbers and there is little conformity in how the numbers are reported by different agencies.

As of July 20, local numbers stood as follows, for Orinda, 72 cases in a population of 19,009, Lafayette had 58 cases in a population of 25,604, and Moraga had just 27 cases in a population of 16,946. For ease of comparison, the county ranks the number according to a projection of how many cases that would represent out of a population of 100,000. Orinda is at 379 by that measure, Lafayette would be at 227, and Moraga would be at 159. Of course, local population is nowhere near that number. Lamorinda's numbers compare to the worst location in Contra Costa County, San Pablo, which had 515 cases in a population of 31,413, or 1,639 cases out of 100,000. The best numbers in the county have been recorded at Bethel Island, which had just 2 cases out of a population of 2,137, which would be just 94 cases out of a population of 100,000.

Despite attempts to get a more detailed breakdown for Lamorinda, city, county and state officials believe that they are limited in what details they can release, citing

privacy concerns outlined in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). However, some aggregate numbers are available at the county or state level.

As of July 15, the state of California had over 356,000 reported cases of COVID-19 and more than 7,000 fatalities. Fatalities were highest among the Latino population at 44%, with whites at just over 31% and Blacks at nearly 9%. Latinos represent almost 39% of California's population, whites over 36% and Blacks only 6%, according to the state database. Latinos also represented nearly 67% of COVID deaths in children up to the age of 17 statewide.

County cases are also broken down by age group, with the highest number being in the 10-30 age group, followed by the age groups by decade. Children 13 to 18 have a slightly higher rate of infection to individuals in the 71 to 80 age group, but the numbers look very different when you look at death rates, as opposed to infection rates. There are very few deaths reported in the county for individuals under the age of 51. The highest death rate is in individuals from 81 to 90, followed by those over the age of 90.

There have been only 98 deaths in the county, and of those, over 60 have been residents and staff in long-term care facilities. Orinda experienced an early cluster of infections at the Orinda Acute Care facility, but numbers are low for long-term care facilities in Lafayette and Moraga. Cases in long-term care facilities have been tracked by the state. Only two facilities appear on the state list, how-

ever. Orinda Care Center LLC had 40 reported cases, but under 11 reported deaths and no active cases. Moraga Post Acute had less than 11 cases, with no active cases and no reported deaths. It appears that facilities with no reported cases are not included in the list at all. Lamorinda has 11 long-term care facilities, according to Orinda Vice Mayor Amy Worth.

Worth was involved in an early effort to conduct a baseline survey of long-term care facility residents. The community foundations of Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette raised funds for a local medical group to conduct testing in local long-term care facilities. The doctors of the Orinda Medical Group, Brian Candell, Yenjean Hwang, and Shawn D. Rosen, plus their staff volunteered their time to conduct the testing.

Recently, owing to a sharp rise in the percentage of positive COVID-19 tests in the county to over 8%, the county amended its social distancing health order to tighten face-covering requirements and to prohibit indoor gatherings where there is an elevated risk of infection. The over 8% testing positivity result was sufficient to trigger a review of the reopening activities in the county that had been allowed under a variance received from the state in June.

The county temporarily suspended indoor worship services and required that face coverings be required in outdoor dining settings at all time except when putting food or drink in the mouth, and similar requirements were expanded to members of extended family 'social bubbles.'

PUBLIC NOTICE

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at its meeting held on July 15, 2020, the Board of Directors of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District adopted Ordinance No. 20-03 by the following vote:

AYES: DIRECTORS DONNER, JEX, JORGENS, AND DANZIGER
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: DIRECTOR BAITX
ABSTAIN: NONE

ORDINANCE NO. 20-03

ORDINANCE OF THE MORAGA-ORINDA FIRE DISTRICT OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, SETTING FORTH THE REQUIREMENTS AND/OR RESTRICTIONS PERTAINING TO BANNING OPEN BURNING AND RECREATIONAL FIRES DURING HIGH FIRE SEASON AND PROVIDING FOR ENFORCEMENT OPTIONS AND PENALTIES.

Restriction on Fires During Hazardous Fire Conditions. Open Burning on all lands within the jurisdiction of the Moraga Orinda Fire District ("MOFD"), including the local response area (LRA), is prohibited when the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) issues a burn suspension in the state responsibility area (SRA). Open Burning is also prohibited on all lands within the jurisdiction of the MOFD at any time the Fire Chief or his or her designee finds that atmospheric conditions or other local circumstances make such fires hazardous, including when factors, such as high winds, low fuel moistures, fire weather, the issuance of red flag warnings, or severe threat of wildland fire, present the risk of destruction by wildfire to life, wildlife, property or natural resources. The Fire Chief shall provide notice of the suspension on Open Burning by posting the suspension on the District's website and mailing notice to those residents on its mailing list. This prohibition shall be made effective 24 hours following its declaration. Any person who fails to comply with this section may be subject to a fine of \$500.00 per each day of violation. The prohibition on Open Burning applies to Open Burning, Campfires, Bonfires, Portable Outdoor Fireplaces, Ceremonial Fires and Recreational Fires, as defined in the 2019 California Fire Code. Campfires on private lands, with a MOFD issued fire permit and any additional restrictions as determined by MOFD staff.

The Ordinance shall become effective on August 15, 2020. The full text of Ordinance No. 20-03 is available for review by contacting the District Clerk during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) or online in the Agenda Packet posted for the meeting of July 15, 2020 at www.mofd.org. Marcia Holbrook, District Secretary/District Clerk CCT #6440961

~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

PPP has saved downtown retail ... so far



Caroline's Salon after its reopening in June.

Photo courtesy Caroline Wiseman

By Sophie Braccini

Lamorinda businesses these past months have faced a difficult situation with opening, distancing, closing again, mask wearing and seeing a reduced number of clients than usual. With two waves of Paycheck Protection Program loans many are managing to keep their financial heads above water. While being creative and innovative, the future of Lamorinda retail businesses is still unknown, and will likely depend on how much community support they receive.

For Caroline Wiseman, reopening her hair salon, Caroline's Salon, in June was a celebration. Drove of people came to get their hair done and her team of 26 employees worked overtime six days a week to accommodate the number of appointments. But then came the July 13 rollback restrictions and she had to close again. She says that PPP loans allowed her to pay her employees and her rent, but this time it is unemployment for all and negotiation with Cortese Investment for the rent. According to Wiseman, the landlord is accommodating.

Tricia Wilkalis, the general manager of Cortese Investment Company, agrees that PPP has been critical during this period. She adds that their business tenants have been able to quickly adapt to the current guidelines with social distancing, masks, hand sanitizing standards, expanding outdoor dining, etc. and that they will continue to partner with them through this challenging period. Cortese Investment owns, among other properties, the Mercantile

center on Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Lafayette's La Fiesta Square.

Maria Gastelumendi at Rising Loafer in Lafayette also got through the first months with a PPP loan from Patelco Credit Union in Lafayette. At first the membership-driven financial institution was reluctant to be a conduit for the Small Business Administration-backed program, but Richard Wada, senior vice president, chief lending officer of the northern California non-profit organization, said that many of their members are small businesses and they got so many requests that they had to move forward with the program. Gastelumendi got a \$10,000 PPP loan through Patelco, which has allowed her to stay open.

Now like so many restaurants she has had to reinvent herself, testing recipes with customers and deciding on a limited number of dinners-for-two that are offered daily for pickup.

At the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director Kathe Nelson has been on the phone with her members daily answering questions about the different options available to support small businesses. She is very concerned for some of them, such as the dry cleaners that have seen their business collapse as people stay home; not to mention the gyms or programs like Luna in Moraga that offers gymnastics for children and has been closed for months now. Joy in Motion however, also based in Moraga, has moved its practices online, offering 4-week virtual summer camps. Justin Cole, co-owner of the dance school, was

happily surprised to see the delight of even his youngest audiences when provided with the opportunity to be moving to the beat of an online class. He is looking into providing an outdoor camp on his premises.

24 Hour Fitness filed for bankruptcy in June, closed a third of its locations, and let many Moraga trainers go on July 1 – including favorite senior fitness specialist Stuart Moore. Management confirmed that the Moraga location will not close permanently and is prepping for a special protocol to keep people safe when they return.

In Orinda, Helen Bentskowski, who opened the gift shop Sanvitalia four and a half years ago, was not able to secure a PPP loan for that store. She owns two shops as a sole proprietor and SBA would approve only one loan per owner. The store in Theatre Square was closed for over three months and Bentskowski says that the property owner did not offer any relief to the tenant. Bentskowski was able to reopen the beginning of July, offering her unique gifts, as well as the succulent and orchid arrangements she is known for. She said that business was slow in the Square, though some of her regular customers were back and she has done everything she could in the retail space, including providing gloves to any entering party, to make it safe. She stressed how important the community support is at this time, otherwise businesses such as hers would disappear from downtown areas.

... continued on Page B2

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Double Chocolate S'mookies deliver summer s'mores flavor



Double Chocolate S'mookies

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

My friend sent me a recipe for s'mores cookies last week and I thought it looked so delicious that I literally made them (with my own variations) the very same day. Nothing screams summer like s'mores, especially for

kids, but if you don't happen to have campfire capabilities in your own backyard, these are a close second and can be made right in the oven. We had a family with three kids visiting us, and although we have a fire pit and usually make real s'mores, this was a fun project to do with them.

Everyone raved about the cookie dough, too, so be careful to guard it carefully or you might not have any cookies to bake! These are best eaten right after baking, to maintain the s'mores feeling of gooey chocolate and marshmallow goodness.

*This dough is almost exactly the same as my triple chip cookie dough, but this one calls for cornstarch, which helps to keep the cookies softer and chewier. I am going to try using it in my regular chocolate chip cookie recipe next time, too.

Double Chocolate S'mookies

(Makes about 3 dozen cookies)

INGREDIENTS

1 cup butter, (2 sticks) softened to room temperature
 1/2 cup granulated sugar
 1 cup light brown sugar
 2 large eggs
 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
 2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 2 teaspoons cornstarch*
 1 cup dark chocolate chips (I use 60% cacao)
 1/2 cup milk chocolate chips (can substitute mini Reese's cut into bits)
 2 cups mini marshmallows, cut in half with kitchen scissors
 8 whole graham crackers coarsely chopped

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray a cookie sheet with cooking spray or line with parchment paper.

In a large mixing bowl, beat butter with both sugars until creamy. Stir in vanilla and egg and beat until well incorporated.

In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cornstarch. Slowly add to butter-egg mixture and beat on slow speed until thoroughly mixed in.

Stir in chocolate chips, marshmallows and graham cracker pieces. Refrigerate dough for one to two hours before baking.

Using your hands, make balls about 1 1/2-inch in diameter and place on prepared baking sheet.

Bake for 10-12 minutes or until cookies are done and chocolate and marshmallows are gooey. Remove from oven and cool for about 5-10 minutes. Gobble them up as soon as they are set enough to get them off the baking sheet in one piece!

Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>



Family Focus

Some Covid-19 issues for couples

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

Relationships can be strained during the best of times. Typically, most couples find ways both to spend time together and also to pursue separate interests and activities. With the onset of COVID-19 recommendations and restrictions, some couples have found their relationships tested as they necessarily spend increased time together in a more isolated capacity. With more limited social interactions and fewer fun events to enjoy and look forward to, couples may take out their frustrations on each other. Here are some issues that I have seen in the past few months:

Increased stress for couples due to juggling work commitments, child care and home schooling, and lack of alone time

A big strain has been on couples who both work full-time and have young children who require attention. Prior to the virus, these couples had reliable day care. Some can now continue with their arrangements. But others are reluctant to send their chil-

dren back to a day care setting or have their nanny or babysitter return to their residence. Fear of exposure to the virus for themselves or older members of their family or their child interferes with a smooth transition back to day care provisions.

One couple, whom I first met with for couples work in April, both have high-level responsible positions that require 50- to 60-hour work weeks. "Kevin" and "Jocelyn" have an 18-month-old child, "Beau," who had been in day care for over a year prior to the coronavirus. Kevin has diabetes and must now be extremely careful. Both Kevin and Jocelyn currently work from home and alternate caring for their toddler.

This couple, who have been together for eight years, never experienced relationship problems until recently. They were extremely stressed because of their job demands and were much more irritable with each other while trying to juggle childcare responsibilities. Instead of working together as a team, they argued and blamed and generally had a high level of resentment to-

ward each other. When both partners are very stressed, the ability to feel compassion for the other is compromised. Not having much individual time takes its toll as well. If life suddenly becomes all about work – job, childcare, household chores – our mood and outlook can be greatly affected.

One solution was to develop a daily schedule for each partner that allows for work, childcare, and some individual time. Kevin and Jocelyn could try to cover for each other occasionally, but it was important to delineate time they each could count on for their specific needs. Other sessions addressed their unexpressed, distressing emotions – feeling helpless, overwhelmed, worried and fearful. Once they understood the larger picture of what was triggering their negative interaction, they could feel more united and supportive of each other.

Strains on your relationship while being socially isolated

There can be more pressure on your relationship now that you need to rely more on

each other for companionship. One drawback is that personality characteristics can become more evident and pronounced. Existing conflicts can be heightened with more exposure to each other and because there are not as many ways to avoid them. One client, "Liz" complains that her husband has now become more of a worrier. She is already somewhat worried about their finances and health considerations for her elderly father and for themselves. Liz actively tries not to worry, however, since she knows it doesn't help and only makes her unhappy. So, when her husband, "Mitch," uses her as a sounding board for all of his worries, she has a difficult time listening and giving support. She knows he has more time on his hands for reflection and few others to turn to. I suggested that she encourage him to also talk to a therapist during this time, both to alleviate some of his anxiety and also to help Liz.

It is important to incorporate others into your lives at this time. Whether you visit remotely or in person at a distance, it is up to all of us to maintain relationships with others as best we can. If you are accustomed to a variety of people and activities in your life, it is understandable that you miss having a full life. This is a time of challenge to try to find ways both to fulfill yourself and to help keep your relationship strong.

Disagreement on precautions for safety from the coronavirus

This is a new development that I've never dealt with before as a therapist – couples and families living together who have different views on how to be safe in view of a potentially dangerous virus. I have seen and heard of many heated disagreements, all of which are really fear-based and not about control. Children and teens may regard parents' concerns and restrictions as a way for them to be intrusively controlling during this time. This viewpoint is very unfair to parents and needs to be explained and challenged. Older children need to read and hear much of the information available about the virus so that it comes from an objective source and not just from their "overly-involved" parents.

When couples differ on

how to manage during this time, the cost in relationship satisfaction can be considerable. "Brad" and "Linda" have been married for 44 years and are both in the high-risk population for the virus. We have been working together for over a year, and now the issue of safety has loomed large. Linda wants to be extremely cautious and not take any risks. This means not venturing out among people to shop, go to restaurants, or socialize. Brad has a different attitude and thinks the incidence and potential dangers of the coronavirus are somewhat exaggerated. Linda is afraid that if Brad contracts the virus because he's decided to play golf or fly to visit his brother, then she will be at risk. She is worried for both of them and would like Brad to be more concerned as well.

Because of their different approaches, both Linda and Brad built up resentment toward each other. Each felt the other didn't care enough about his or her feelings. Linda was too fearful to do anything different, while Brad felt too stifled. The only solution was to compromise. Brad agreed to list current activities he wanted to engage in, and Linda agreed to select three of them that she could try to tolerate. Brad agreed to take all of the safety precautions that Linda urged. And Brad also agreed that he would not do anything that caused Linda to have deep fear; in other words, he was willing to give her veto power. With each yielding some and showing understanding of the other's needs, this couple has been able to overcome much of their virus-related conflict.

If you are experiencing difficulty in your relationship at this time, it is important for one or both of you to get some professional help.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a local marriage and family therapist. Contact her at (925) 376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com. She is currently working remotely on FaceTime, Zoom and by phone.

PPP has saved downtown retail ... so far



Caroline's Salon

Photo provided

... continued from Page B1

Wilkalis believes that what is happening now will affect downtown retail permanently. Before the pandemic, she explained that owners had already been seeing a shift in internet-resilient businesses occupying downtown. Moving forward, she says that the city and landlords are going to need to have the willingness and flexibility to attract businesses that are both internet and pandemic resilient; what that is going to look like is still unknown. Chris Curtis, a real estate broker in the East Bay says that the shift will likely have to accommodate more workers working permanently from home, with some large offices having to repurpose their spaces, while remodeling of homes and people moving from cities to the suburbs will continue to grow.

New art installation at Moraga Commons brings added whimsy to the park



Utility box artist Anna Shao

Photo Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

Situated among the trees along Moraga Road and between the two playgrounds

stands a colorfully appliquéd utility box, entitled “Moraga Beauty,” covered with various flowers and the town symbol – Bartlett pears. The artist is Campolindo

High School student Anna Shao, 16. “I’ve always loved nature and wildlife,” stated Shao. “I wanted to make something that other people would enjoy.”

The project started when Sue Olsen of The Olsen Team realtors approached Teresa Onoda, liaison to the town council for Art in Public Spaces. Olsen was interested in donating funds toward an art creation in town. Onoda decided to give a young artist a chance at local notoriety by “calling the Campolindo art teacher to see who would be the right person to do it.” The decision was made to decorate a utility box that was owned by the town, because it didn’t require council approval.

Shao wrapped her paper “canvas” around the sides and the top of the 6-foot by 3-foot utility box before first

drawing her designs in pencil. “I wanted to do a collection of all the flowers I’ve seen in Moraga,” Shao explained. “I did a lot of research on native plants and made modifications to highlight certain aspects of them.” Her finished painting was then transferred onto another surface that would allow her art to cover the box in a shrink-wrap process much like applying contact paper.

Shao enjoyed this new experience of art creation from its inception in December to the installation at the Commons on June 17. “This was such a great opportunity for me to see what it would be like if I was going to pursue a career in art,” Shao said. “It was really fun!”

Stating that this was a pilot program, Onoda said, “This one has been such a huge success, we might be

open to more. I really want to thank Anna for her talent and her generosity and her time, and Sue Olsen for making this possible.”

Shao has received glowing reviews from family and friends who have posted photos on social media. Onoda has heard positive comments such as: “Beautiful”, “It has so much life to it”, “It’s a wonderful addition to the park”, and “Who did it; are they professional?”

“Moraga stands for family, great schools, athletics and has all the potential in the world to stand for art,” Onoda stated. “All of these elements increase the value of our homes and our lives. A small investment in art can provide a return worth millions of dollars in the increased values of our homes, plus it lifts our spirits.”

Campo student fundraiser focused on COVID-19 relief



Photos provided



We@Campo, a club associated with the We.org movement that provides people (especially students) the tools to change the world, held a spring fundraiser facilitated by Arjun Chhabra, an incoming senior at Campolindo High School, by selling beautiful, handcrafted Rafiki bracelets for Mother’s Day and graduation.

“Rafiki bracelets are inspired by Maasai beading traditions in Kenya, handmade with love by women known as mamas,” said Chhabra, who followed CDC guidelines for local delivery. “We raised \$1,234 benefiting education, health, water, food, and COVID-19 relief internationally in this campaign and are planning our next one already!”

Shannon Tague, one of the Class of 2020 advisors at Campo, helped implement the Plan “C” Campaign which was a coordinated effort to virtually celebrate Campo’s Senior Class during the last two months of the school year. “Each week we would pick a word that started with the letter ‘C’ and use it as a themed rally-call ... words such as community, celebration, commemorate,” Tague said. “Arjun contacted me with an incredibly well-written communication regarding his fundraising effort selling Rafiki bracelets and asked if we could include it in our weekly communication to the senior parents. Many were looking for small, meaningful gifts to purchase as graduation gifts, and loved the added benefit of supporting a Campo-based organization focused on bettering the world. Despite the [shelter-in-place], Arjun found a way to smartly fundraise for his organization and showcase Campo’s commitment to helping those in need.”

– J. Wake



Rafiki bracelets were delivered safely during student fundraiser.



Arjun Chhabra wears a Rafiki bracelet.

Lions scholarships awarded in June



Kelly Robles and Leo Club advisor Sarah Morgan.

Photo provided

Submitted by Robert Murtagh

The Lamorinda Lions Club continued to present \$1,000 scholarships to three Campolindo High School graduates during June. Those receiving the awards are: Kelly Robles, Leo Club President, C.J. Rago, Leo Club Vice-President and Brent Avenall.

Robles and Avenall were recognized for their scholarship achievement and Rago for his community service during his four years at Campolindo. Due to the shortened school year and the Health Department requirements regarding the virus, the club was not able to participate in an Annual Awards Night at Campolindo.

The Lions Club congratulates all the Class of 2020!

In Memory

George C Fisher, Jr



George Fisher, aged 93, passed away peacefully at home June 10, surrounded by family in The Villages, Fla.

A Naval veteran of WW II, he was a graduate of the University of Orono, Maine.

He spent his career as a salesman for Milliken, Inc.

Living in Moraga for 50 years, both George and wife Julie became involved in every aspect of the town. Beginning with the incorporation of the town in 1974 until their departure to Florida in 2014, most of their time was centered around Parks & Recreation endeavors. With a tenacious, organized and relentless drive, he was instrumental in the development of the trail system that connected throughout the Bay

Area. The purchase of the historic Hacienda de la Flores and the founding of The Moraga Movers were particular bright spots of achievement. But most importantly, he was responsible for the placement of a post office mailbox in the Moraga Shopping Center. Mom and Dad were named “Citizens of the Year” in 2006.

A dedicated member of the Church of Religious Science, Oakland, he was a lifelong student of metaphysical studies. It was his idea to begin recording every sermon for those who could not attend. His commitment to positive thinking influenced everyone around him.

He was known as a genial host of many successful parties, notably the New Year’s Day Recovery Party. The lifelong friendships formed during their years in California were unmatched.

Many groups attracted his attention during his time in The Villages. He introduced nextdoor.com, now one of the most prolific websites used by residents.

He was predeceased by his son John in March 2020.

Survived by wife Julie Fisher, daughters Holly (Jim) Baumgartner, Ann (Tim) Wright, sister Joan Ewing and granddaughters Casey and Kelly Wright.

Condolences can be sent to The Fisher Family, 856 Folsum Place, The Villages, FL 32162

Community Service: We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda’s dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com, and include “Celebrations and Remembrances” in the subject line.



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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Ron Kroichick's perspective on sports writing today



Photo provided

Ron Kroichick and his son Trevin at the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach in June 2019.

By Jon Kingdon

"Find a job you enjoy doing and you'll never have to work a day in your life." – Mark Twain

Ron Kroichick, longtime sportswriter for the San Francisco Chronicle, took those words to heart: "I was always into sports and I liked to write so it was a perfect match. It merged my passions."

These passions have led to much recognition for Kroichick's writing: Best Sports Feature in 2016, California Newspaper Publishers Association (for series on Najee Harris, the nation's No. 1 college football recruit); Five-time honoree, Associated Press Sports Editors writing contest; Four-time honoree, Golf Writers Association of America writing contest.

Kroichick, a longtime Lamorinda resident, was born in Chicago and moved to San Diego when he was 12. It was then when Kroichick began anticipating a career as a sportswriter: "I knew at age 12-14 that being a sportswriter was what I wanted to do."

From that point, Kroichick kept his eye on the prize. Despite being an all-league tennis player and a member of the Patrick Henry High School basketball team, it was clear to Kroichick that a career as a professional athlete was not in the offing and that a career in sports journalism was a far more realistic career goal. As the sports editor and eventually the editor-in-chief for his high school newspaper, Kroichick went on to UC Berkeley where he became the sports editor of the school paper as a sophomore.

It was a perfect match for him, says Kroichick who graduated in 1987 with a BA in English: "Berkeley had a great English department and the combination of top flight academic school and working on the student paper provided me with a really good experience there."

After an internship with the Riverside Press-Enterprise, Kroichick took a part-time job with the Sacramento Bee that soon became a full-time position and later allowed Kroichick to live in the Bay

Area, which he had come to love during his time at Cal: "I moved back to the Bay Area because I was covering the Oakland A's from 1990 to 1994. It was a great time to be covering the A's with Jose Canseco, Mark McGwire, and Rickey Henderson, among others. That experience really shaped me as a sportswriter because I got to cover this 'rock-star' kind of team. Not only did they win a lot, they were full of personalities."

It was also a job more suited to an unmarried reporter: "I did get tired of the travel, being on the road constantly," Kroichick said. "I got married in 1993 so when the Raiders returned to the Bay Area in 1995, that prompted me to get my job with the Chronicle. This enabled me to get off the road and covering football made for a much more manageable life."

It pays to have a "liberal arts" education in sports to be a sportswriter. It has not been all football, baseball and basketball for Kroichick. He has been called on to cover boxing matches ("which was way beyond me") and a horse race at the California State Fair ("I was a fish out of water there") but the reporting tools translate the same for any event.

"You're a storyteller," says Kroichick. "It does help if you have a passion and a background for a sport but if you can tell stories, ask the right questions and express yourself with clarity, you can cover anything. I did cover figure skating at the Olympics in Norway in 1994 for the Bee which was the year of the Tonya Harding-Nancy Kerrigan controversy. But that was more soap opera than figure skating."

Working on the road, Kroichick developed more of a relationship with his fellow writers than with those working in the office of his paper: "There is a camaraderie and a bit of a fraternity because you don't have that social interaction most people have at the office. We either work at home or at an event so the other beat writers became my

friends. When I started covering the A's, I was only 24 so a lot of the writers were from my dad's generation. They were helpful, not so much about writing but how to handle the life – how to manage the travel, how to take it when a player would get angry at you."

When Kroichick was at Cal, he did some work under Dan McGrath for the Chronicle and it was McGrath as sports editor for the Bee who gave Kroichick his first full-time job. McGrath's initial advice was short and to the point: "Dan told me to 'Keep your eyes and ears open and don't think you know it all because you don't.' It's the best advice I ever got."

It's more than just covering a game and writing a story for the reporter today. Working as a beat reporter, covering the Oakland A's was a job with constant deadlines. Kroichick's chosen field at Cal prepared him to operate with the clock ticking: "It helped that I was an English major, writing essays and papers at the last minute in college," Kroichick said. "You learned how to organize your thoughts quickly. Baseball was great training for that because I was on deadline pretty much every night. Those five years really set me up where I learned to not panic, write quickly, organize my thoughts and express them clearly."

In dealing with so many different types of personalities, it's only natural for a reporter to develop relationships, friendships, and respect for a number of the athletes and to have favorite players and coaches to deal with. It was certainly no different for Kroichick: "It's not like it's a big chore for them to talk with us. If they treat you like a person, that does not go unnoticed and is appreciated."

Dennis Eckersley - Oakland A's – "I still keep in touch with Eck. He was so real, and I admired his authenticity. He wasn't afraid to show his vulnerabilities. Even after giving up a big home run, he would stand up and answer our

questions. He really took responsibility for his successes and his failures."

Stephen Curry - Golden State Warriors – "Steph might be the most grounded superstar in sports today. He treats people with respect. There are times we'll talk about golf, a big passion for him and it's like two guys hanging out and chatting."

Steve Young, former 49ers quarterback – "I've gotten to know him through the 49ers and golf events. He is such a good guy who is willing to connect on many different levels. I talked with Steve at Pebble Beach after the Super Bowl earlier this year, and he gave me some great quotes about Kyle Shanahan and Jimmy Garoppolo."

Steve Kerr – Golden State Warriors – "He is just so smart and does not have a big ego which is unusual for someone so successful at the highest level. He can also talk about many subjects beyond basketball. He's really intelligent and doesn't talk down to the writers."

As for his favorite sports to cover, Kroichick has found much truth in George Plimpton's perspective on sports: The smaller the ball, the better the writing. "I think there is some truth to that," says Kroichick. "It's the pace of the game. Baseball and golf are my favorite sports to cover. Baseball is better to write about because it unfolds at a slower pace, so you have time to develop a story. I've covered golf over the last 15 years. It develops at a slow, rhythmic pace where you have time to delve into a player's backstory and personality, covering much more than just what club he hit. I really have become more into golf the last 10 years because I've been able to play with my son, Trevin, and it's been a great father-son bonding thing."

As the games and athletes have evolved, so have the fans which is something that the sportswriter has to take into account, says Kroichick:

... continued on Page C2

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Ron Kroichick's perspective on sports writing today

... continued from Page C1

"You know that everyone is going to have the score on their phone or they have watched the game on TV so explaining what happened is no longer enough. You have to give them a reason to read the story beyond that the A's won or the Raiders lost. You need to provide an insight into things like why they called a certain play or why a player felt good or poorly that day. That is why it helps to have a relationship with the athletes

and an insight into their past or some twist which then allows you to write original content that isn't going to seem stale to the readers. My goal is to provide something that readers and fans can't get anywhere else."

With the loss of many newspapers and the reduction in the staffs of the papers that have survived, aspiring journalists need to be alert to other opportunities that may be available, says Kroichick: "If I were just coming out of college and had ambitions of being a sportswriter, my first

piece of advice would be to have a plan B. There are all kinds of ways to be involved in the sports industry that might not be traditional journalism because the reality is that traditional journalism has changed and has contracted and there are simply fewer jobs available."

Working for a good publication in a very desirable market has allowed Kroichick to live the fans dream, having covered World Series, Super Bowls, NBA Finals, 11 Master and US Open golf tournaments. Yet none of these have


compared to the thrill Kroichick found watching his son play for and have a lot of success for the Campolindo High School basketball and baseball teams.

"I've had a really fortunate career to cover these events and I don't think anything has been more exciting than watching Trevin," he said. "In fact, it's not even close. The most exhilarating feeling I've ever had in sports was seeing Trevin succeed in sports at Campo. When Trevin hit the winning free throws against Whitney in the state

tournament, the adrenaline rush was so much better than any sporting event I ever covered. It's not only that he had a good experience but that my wife and I were able to watch him and share it together."

Though his career at the Chronicle is far from complete, Kroichick can look back on his life and work so far with great affection: "I just feel grateful I've gotten to do what I love to do, and do it where I want to live."


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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 14 Issue 11 Wednesday, July 22, 2020



Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian **Sweet, savory summer**



Beautiful pink cherry plums hang on the tree.

Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

“Steep thyself in a bowl of summer.” – Virgil

Summer! Just saying the word puts a smile on my face.

Since I was a little girl, the months of July and August were times of great joy, working as a laborer picking or cutting apricots, peaches, and pears in neighbors' orchards or

fruit shed to earn money for college during the day, followed by unwinding with evening baseball games in the fields. Sundays were spent with cousins and relatives swimming in the pool at my grandparents' vineyard. Our parents would prepare a feast for dinner after harvesting whatever vegetables were ready in the garden while the kids braved the thorny brambles to find the juiciest berries for dessert. In the station wagon on

the way back to our ranch, we'd fall blissfully asleep, our hearts filled with happy memories and our bellies pleasantly satiated, except, of course, for my Dad, the driver.

Summer boasts a sweet and savory story with harvests of corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, peaches, pears, apples, plums, prunes, eggplants, zucchini, berries, peppers, and other nutritious treats that will grace our dining tables. Although this summer I won't be hosting any barbecue buffets, I still enjoy picking fresh fruit in my orchard and eating my home-grown vegetables. Pink cherry plums are plump and especially delicious this year as are the deep dark purple prunes. Prunes and plums come from the same genus, *prunus*, yet they are not identical.

... continued on Page D10



Shrub filled with black currant berries.

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Lamorinda home sales recorded

City	Last reported	Lowest amount	Highest amount
LAFAYETTE	24	\$1,010,000	\$2,400,000
MORAGA	11	\$660,000	\$2,125,000
ORINDA	14	\$815,000	\$3,200,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 3219 Apache Court, \$1,270,000, 3 Bdrms, 1767 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 06-04-20
3232 Brookwood Drive, \$1,845,000, 4 Bdrms, 3644 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 06-08-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,610,000, 06-13-17
7 Butler Drive, \$2,200,000, 3 Bdrms, 3606 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 06-05-20
376 Castello Road, \$1,575,000, 5 Bdrms, 2319 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 06-09-20,
Previous Sale: \$975,000, 09-28-07
3164 Cordova Way, \$1,425,000, 3 Bdrms, 1840 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 06-05-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,150,000, 06-03-16
905 Dewing Avenue, \$2,225,000, 2 Bdrms, 1349 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 06-01-20,
Previous Sale: \$850,000, 06-16-18
3550 East View Drive, \$1,760,000, 3 Bdrms, 2782 SqFt, 1945 YrBlt, 06-09-20
3262 Elvia Street, \$1,650,000, 4 Bdrms, 2964 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 06-08-20,
Previous Sale: \$196,000, 07-01-85
482 Florence Drive, \$1,435,000, 3 Bdrms, 1813 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 06-01-20,
Previous Sale: \$840,000, 09-22-04
638 Los Palos Drive, \$2,400,000, 4 Bdrms, 2710 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 06-08-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,022,000, 03-16-01
3143 Old Tunnel Road, \$1,010,000, 3 Bdrms, 2013 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 06-10-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,085,000, 08-24-18
569 Silverado Drive, \$2,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2585 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 06-03-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,225,000, 02-21-17
1015 Silverhill Drive, \$1,650,000, 5 Bdrms, 4877 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 05-22-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,437,000, 07-17-17
3437 Stage Coach Drive, \$2,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 4042 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 05-29-20,
Previous Sale: \$835,000, 10-01-91
3379 St Marys Road, \$1,650,000, 4 Bdrms, 2791 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 06-12-20
1154 Sunrise Ridge Drive, \$1,685,000, 5 Bdrms, 3102 SqFt, 1996 YrBlt, 06-08-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,600,000, 04-09-18
3266 Sweet Drive, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1202 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 06-12-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,395,000, 07-18-18
1045 Timothy Lane, \$2,180,000, 4 Bdrms, 2833 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 05-20-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,650,000, 05-26-17
1146 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$1,620,000, 2 Bdrms, 1089 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt,
06-09-20
1034 Via Media, \$1,250,000, 2 Bdrms, 3102 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 06-08-20
1049 Via Nueva, \$2,315,000, 4 Bdrms, 3057 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 06-08-20,
Previous Sale: \$395,000, 09-15-98
1029 Willow Drive, \$2,282,500, 5 Bdrms, 3576 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 05-21-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,760,000, 08-15-17
3980 Woodside Court, \$1,575,000, 4 Bdrms, 2534 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 06-08-20
3375 Woodview Drive, \$1,925,000, 4 Bdrms, 2803 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 06-08-20,
Previous Sale: \$139,500, 09-01-77

... continued on Page D8



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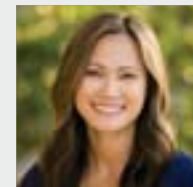
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472 KINGSFORD DRIVE, MORAGA \$1,490,000



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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS-T

The second quarter of 2020 was surprisingly strong although with a smaller volume of closed sales on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate. The closings that occurred were those that mostly went under contract from mid-February to late May – the beginning several weeks were in flux because of the restrictions on showing homes that were in place and then increased once agents understood the allowable parameters of how to show houses.

Agents have not been able to hold physical broker or public open houses for several weeks, but homes could and can be shown either virtually or through appointments with listing agents.

Supply started the quarter with less than a typical amount of inventory, but that increased through especially May and June.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from April 1 through June 30, 65 single family homes closed in Lafayette. This was a sharp decrease from the 105 single family homes closed in the same period one year ago. Sales prices ranged from \$950,000 to \$3.338 million and the average number of days on market was 15. In the year ago second quarter it was 22 days. The average sales price was \$1,794,912 – nearly the same as a year ago when it was \$1,779,112.

In Moraga there were 41 single-family closings, which was down from 52 in the year ago period. Prices ranged from \$900,000 to \$2.265 million. The average sale price was \$1,548,585, again almost identical to 2019 when it was \$1,542,888 and 2018's \$1,508,591. The average marketing time was down slightly to 13 days from 17 days a year ago.

In Orinda, the number of single-family closings was down to 60 from 77 a year ago and 97 in 2Q18. Sales prices ranged from \$785,000 to \$3.8 million with an average price of \$1,808,271, a substantial increase

from \$1,623,995 in this quarter in 2019. In 2018 it was \$1,705,473 and \$1,723,552 in 2017. It took an average of 25 days to have a house go pending, about the same as the 23 days in the same period a year ago.

In the quarter ending June 30, on an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette detached single-family homes sold at \$683.27. One year ago it was \$708.33. It was \$693.66 per square foot in 2018. Moraga homes sold for \$651.11 – a continued increase from the \$620.42 in 2019 and up from \$577.39 per square foot in 2018. Orinda was down again to \$657.88 this quarter from \$672.90 a year ago and up from \$635.35 in 2Q2018.

In Lafayette, the average sales price was 99.6% of the final asking price. In Moraga it was 100.5% and in Orinda it was 99.6%. This is the first time in several quarters where the average sales price was actually below the average list price.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had three closings between \$815,000 and \$1.825 million, Moraga had 10, down from 20 a year ago and in 2018 when there were 34. They ranged from \$329,000 to \$1.31 million. Orinda had none.

As of July 16, there were 100 homes under contract in the MLS in the three communities combined. A year ago, there were 78 homes under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined. It should be pointed out that there is only one foreclosure. This increase can be partially explained by more homes coming on the market in May and June and early July that were withheld at the beginning of the pandemic.

Inventory remains relatively low. There are 127 properties on the market and a year ago there were 146 available properties in the three communities combined.

There are “only” 45 properties on the market in Lafayette – about the same as the 42 at this same time a year ago. Asking prices in Lafayette currently range from \$795,000 to \$5.495 million. In Moraga, buy-

ers have their choice of 37 homes or condominiums listed between \$440,888 and \$3.2 million. A year ago at this time there were 34.

In Orinda there are 45 – again a huge decrease from 70 on the market at the same time a year ago. The list prices range from \$1.165 million to \$8.995 million. And a few are new construction in Wilder. There are no bank-owned or short sales currently in the MLS available in the three communities.

At the high end, 40 homes sold above \$2 million in the three communities combined. A year ago, there were 56. There are also 29 currently available above this amount in Lamorinda.

Interest rates continue to fall making for more affordability, and we are seeing some buyers come to the area because they feel they will likely not be commuting as much (especially on the tech side) and feel that to live further distances from San Francisco or Silicon Valley is now more manageable.

Lastly, it is important to look at what homes are selling for versus their list prices. Often homes come on the market at unrealistic prices, and they do not sell, but in the second quarter of this year still many homes have had multiple offers and have sold at or above the list price.

We are still seeing many buyers having to make offers without the traditional contingencies of obtaining financing or having a home appraise or even having the home inspected. Many sellers are now opting to obtain pre-sale inspections in order to understand the condition of their homes and to also prevent a buyer from trying to renegotiate a lower price or repairs.


Of the 65 single family sales that closed in Lafayette in the second quarter of 2020, 33 sold at or above the final list price.

In Moraga, 27 of the 41 sales were at or above the asking price and in Orinda, 38 of the 60 sold at or above the final listing price.

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Lamorinda home sales recorded

... continued from Page D2

MORAGA

- 63 Ashbrook Place, \$1,557,500, 4 Bdrms, 2578 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 06-02-20,
Previous Sale: \$885,000, 09-21-11
- 718 Augusta Drive, \$989,000, 3 Bdrms, 2065 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 06-12-20,
Previous Sale: \$745,000, 06-25-09
- 164 Calle La Montana, \$1,550,000, 4 Bdrms, 2416 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 06-08-20
- 1435 Camino Peral, \$660,000, 2 Bdrms, 1159 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 06-08-20,
Previous Sale: \$395,000, 03-05-10
- 762 Camino Ricardo, \$1,735,000, 4 Bdrms, 2259 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 06-03-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,525,000, 12-04-15
- 11 Gloria Court, \$1,350,000, 4 Bdrms, 1573 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 06-12-20
- 4 Huff Court, \$1,325,000, 3 Bdrms, 1448 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 06-12-20,
Previous Sale: \$655,000, 05-19-10
- 117 Natalie Drive, \$1,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 1942 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 06-04-20,
Previous Sale: \$663,000, 11-14-12
- 1743 Spyglass Lane, \$1,350,000, 4 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 05-20-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,310,000, 06-01-18
- 56 Warfield Drive, \$1,543,500, 5 Bdrms, 2205 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 06-12-20,
Previous Sale: \$129,000, 06-01-78
- 180 Willowbrook Lane, \$2,125,000, 3 Bdrms, 3000 SqFt, 2016 YrBlt, 06-11-20,
Previous Sale: \$2,005,000, 02-28-17

ORINDA

- 15 Donald Drive, \$1,500,000, 3 Bdrms, 2977 SqFt, 1991 YrBlt, 06-10-20
- 51 Donna Maria Way, \$1,899,000, 4 Bdrms, 3157 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 06-01-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,825,000, 10-24-17
- 17 Estabueno Drive, \$1,700,000, 5 Bdrms, 2564 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 06-11-20
- 513 Miner Road, \$3,008,000, 3 Bdrms, 3825 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 06-12-20
- 458 Moraga Way, \$815,000, 3 Bdrms, 1222 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 06-08-20
- 50 Muth Drive, \$1,575,000, 4 Bdrms, 3169 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 06-12-20
- 16 Oak Court, \$2,055,000, 4 Bdrms, 3749 SqFt, 2002 YrBlt, 06-12-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,765,000, 10-25-04
- 49 Overhill Road, \$2,700,000, 6 Bdrms, 4970 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 06-03-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,575,000, 07-08-15
- 5 Paintbrush Lane, \$2,750,000, 5 Bdrms, 5269 SqFt, 2010 YrBlt, 05-19-20
- 4 Ramona Drive, \$1,265,000, 3 Bdrms, 1296 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 06-12-20
- 21 Sycamore Road, \$2,800,000, 3 Bdrms, 4545 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 05-27-20
- 121 Tappan Lane, \$2,999,000, 4 Bdrms, 3651 SqFt, 1982 YrBlt, 06-04-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,610,000, 07-21-17
- 2 Van Ripper Lane, \$3,200,000, 6 Bdrms, 4423 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 06-04-20,
Previous Sale: \$2,735,000, 06-22-16
- 23 West Hill Way, \$2,150,000, 4 Bdrms, 3016 SqFt, 2017 YrBlt, 05-20-20,
Previous Sale: \$2,150,000, 05-31-19

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COMPASS



Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Sweet, savory summer



Cynthia's mom's Italian traditional tomato summer salad grown in the garden.

... continued from Page D1

Plums are usually round, red or yellow, whereas prunes are oval-shaped and purple, almost blackish with a pit that dislodges easily. Plums and prunes are also related to cherries, peaches and almonds, all in the family *Prunus*. This season my cherry plums have a distinct flavor of peaches. My peaches aren't ripe, but they are planted close to the plums. Every year the taste varies. Because cherry plums are the size of cherries and quite crunchy when not over-ripe, I freeze a few and eat them like a popsicle. Sometimes I add the frozen plum to my beverage for an enlivening alternative to ice. I plan on dehydrating some of the prunes or drying them for future use.

My girlfriend, Nora, is a huge fan of black currants, also known as cassis. Over 30 years ago her dad gave her a cutting from their family currant shrub to plant in her garden. Harvesting the currants brings a sweet memory of the times she spent with her



Crocosmia, the firecracker plant is a hummingbird magnet and great for cutting.

doctor dad. This year's crop was profuse. She'll freeze a few cartons of these tasty, complex, and medicinally useful fruit for her family's winter enjoyment. My black currant flowers were prolific, yet my berries were disappointing. A handy tool for harvesting is a Scandinavian berry picker that eliminates having to pluck single berries one by one.

It wouldn't be summer without the sweet and savory ingredients of fresh-picked corn, cucumbers, and heirloom tomatoes. If you are not growing any, farmers' markets have bushels ready to buy. I soak the ears of corn with the husk on in a bucket of water for an hour, then, pull back part of the husks, lather with a basil-garlic butter, and steam them on the barbecue. Yummy! My mother's tomato salad has been a family tradition for ages. Slice heirloom tomatoes, red onions and cucumbers. Add chopped garlic and red, orange, or green bell peppers. Dress with olive oil, wine vinegar, and balsamic. Season to taste. Voila! A beautiful and scrumptious summer salad.



Photos Cynthia Brian

Purple prunes hanging from the branch.

Finally, don't forget to cut a few stems of "pretties" to add to a vase. Right now, the crocosmia or firecracker plant is in full bloom and makes a fantastic cut flower. Leave several in the garden for the hovering hummingbirds. Don't forget to refill fountains so that our bird friends can have a refreshing drink or bath.

Fire season is ramping up and with the recent winds, wildfires could easily ignite. Make sure to cut any tall grass or weeds, trim low hanging branches, clean gutters, and remove debris from around your property.

GardenComm: Garden Communicators International just notified me that I won the 2020 Media Awards Silver Medal of Achievement for a Journalism Newspaper Article, presented by out of 160 entries for my Lamorinda Weekly article, "Scary, scary night." I am honored for this major award and encourage you to have another look at that winning entry because it will help you prepare your landscaping for fire resistance.

... continued on next Page

... continued from Page D10

With this Covid-19 pandemic, the smoke from wildfires has the potential to be extra dangerous or deadly. Read "Scary, scary night" at www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1318/Digging-Deep-with-Goddess-Gardener-Cynthia-Brian-Scary-scary-night.html

Read about the award here:

www.sbwire.com/press-releases/cynthia-brian-receives-silver-medal-of-achievement-in-the-national-2020-gardencomm-media-awards-1296930.htm#

May you enjoy a sweet and savory summer of social distancing and wearing masks.

Be healthy, hopeful, and positive.
Steep thyself in a bowl of summer. I am!
Happy gardening. Happy growing.



Corn stalks growing.



Summer smiles with Cynthia Brian.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is available for hire to help you prepare for your spring garden. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia is a New York Times best-selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach, as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!® 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's StarStyle® Radio Broadcast at www.StarStyleRadio.com. Buy copies of her best-selling books, including, *Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul*, *Growing with the Goddess Gardener*, and *Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers* at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Cynthia is available for virtual writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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