



Published August 5th, 2020

## Letters to the editor

COVID-19 and our business community

Like every city in every country in the world, we find ourselves at a "tipping point" where our actions will dictate our future. Change in the road ahead is imminent. How will we face down this pandemic is still ours to decide! Our business community has become a vital part of the fabric of life in Lafayette. Convenience, variety, and a preference to "small business" has made our downtown vibrant and fun. Many of these same merchants who know you by name, support your schools and causes and provide commerce in a local setting are at the brink of losing everything. Their businesses, their homes, their savings are all at stake. Sound local leadership closed many of our businesses in the spring to stop the spread of COVID-19. And merchants took one for the team when they closed, and then did everything possible to reopen successfully. Our inability to keep this virus under control boils down to misleading information, a sense of invincibility, ignorance and Bad Behavior. We must do the "right thing" and flatten the curve. The only way to do that is to be more diligent in wearing masks, washing hands, social distance and staying at home when possible. What's good for our businesses is good for us. Collecting sales tax is so important to the health of our city. Sales Tax pays for police services, public works, and many of the other services you have come to expect in Lafayette.

Every business has the right to refuse service, as long as it is not discriminatory. No Mask- No Service. One city. One push. We can do this! Let us be leaders in the fight against the virus. 25,000 people, wearing masks, keeping social distancing, and helping keep our merchants in business. Stop the spread of rumors. Know the facts [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) . Get Tested!

WEAR A MASK

PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

STAY AT HOME WHEN POSSIBLE

It's not complicated, yet it's imperative. Lafayette has always been a community that gets it! A little sacrifice now means a lot less sacrifice later.

Jay Lifson

Executive Director, Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

Happy Trails

Here we go again! Another group of homeowners is fighting the establishment of a trail or trailhead ["Outcry over proposed trail staging area.", Lamorinda Weekly, Wednesday, July 22]. In this case, it's the residents of Wilder.

Those residents fear that the establishment of a staging area will lead to the increase of unwanted, illegal, dangerous activity. Their fears are real, but let's look at the history of previous similar situations in Lamorinda.

The residents of Lafayette, particularly those on Moraga Blvd., whose back yards abut the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail, fought the trail over similar concerns. When the Lafayette-Moraga Trail was extended to the Valle Vista Staging Area, residents of Moraga Country Club and residents on School Street-mostly those whose back yards were on the other side of the creek from the trail-fought that trail out of fear that burglars would be able to scope out their homes for later thefts. When Orinda's St. Stephens Trail was under consideration, the residents above the trail were concerned that potential burglars would be able to snoop on their properties. All of those groups also feared that the presence of more people on the trails would bring noise and litter, as well as more dangerous activities.

None of those fears were realized. In fact, time and time again, it has been shown that the mere presence of law-abiding citizens actually discourages illicit activity.

Stan Oberg

Moraga

Thumbs Up for Downtown Momentum

In a landscape of doom and gloom for much 2020 thus far, there is a glimmer of positivity on the horizon. The City of Orinda has been slowly plugging away at a revised Downtown Precise Plan (DPP) that will address at long last a decades old conversation about how to thoughtfully modernize Orinda's Downtown district. Much work has been done to identify 'existing conditions' including current zoning, land usage and structures and Orinda's DPP would update the City's downtown development standards and create objective design standards for multi-family residential and mixed-use projects.

This update is necessary on many levels. First, it will help Orinda attract high level development which will in turn entice an attractive mix of new businesses and increase vitality in our Downtown District. Secondly, it will allow Orinda to make decisions on how to incorporate housing into our Downtown district in a thoughtful way that is in keeping with the City's unique personality and aesthetic.

It is no longer a question of whether Orinda needs to update and change to allow for modernization and revitalization, but how we will do so on our own terms. Applause to our City Planning Department and City Council for diving in and doing the work to keep the future of Orinda's Downtown in the hands of Orinda's

citizens for generations to come!

Kirsten Larsen  
(Representing the  
What's Up Downtown Orinda  
Steering Committee)

Voice your opinion on downtown development in Orinda

Amid all that is wrong in the world these days, the visual cacophony of downtown Orinda is at the bottom of a very long list. But it is something we can change by offering ideas and opinions as the City Council takes steps toward encouraging the private property owners to renew and redevelop our dowdy commercial district.

The new facade at 43 Moraga Way is an inspiring bright spot, a hint of how charming the street could appear. Meetings on Aug. 18 and 26 are opportunities for all Orindans to ask questions and express concerns. (Details on Orinda's website.) Please encourage our city officials to proceed with necessary changes to the existing design standards, so that in a calmer future, carefully considered improvement plans are ready to get underway.

Barbara Bennett  
Orinda

Lafayette litigation and Brown Act

I read with dismay the misleading spin placed by Lafayette officials on the conclusion of litigation brought by Lafayette residents concerning the city's violation of public open meeting laws, commonly referred to as the Brown Act. The city pretended it was exonerated and that residents were to blame for the city's resulting litigation costs. That is false.

Instead of the Lafayette City Council holding a new hearing and spending nothing, they spent \$936,000 on some of the Bay Area's most expensive lawyers litigating their Brown Act open meeting violation. While residents did not obtain all of the relief they requested, they proved that the city had violated the law. The California Court of Appeal ruled the city council's closed sessions "violated the Brown Act" and the "statutory scheme does not allow an agency to thwart its duty of public disclosure in this manner." The city must now disclose with its public agenda litigation statements that are scheduled for closed session.

The Lafayette community should be outraged. Four current Council members were not involved in the original decision, but they should demand an immediate review of the City Attorney who allowed the Brown Act violations and advocated litigation instead of correction. This is not the first time the City Attorney has endorsed such violations. Perhaps wasting taxpayer money doesn't mean much to the city, as long as it can pretend to blame residents whose position the city violated open meeting laws was confirmed by the court.

Eliot Hudson  
Lafayette

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA