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Photo Sora O'Doherty

The new normal: hand sanitizer before entering the classroom on the first day back to school at Del Rey Elementary School since the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of schools.

Elementary students make slow return to classrooms

By Diane Claytor

After 11 long months, meeting after meeting, survey upon survey, plans and schedules developed and revised, guidelines given then changed, and opening dates aborted, it's finally a reality. Lamorinda schools are open for TK (transitional kindergarten) through sixth grade in-person classes.

It's been a long process with an incredible

number of moving parts. And while it's certainly not a return to what school days looked like pre-COVID, it's definitely a step in the right direction.

Each school district's plans are slightly different than its neighbors, but all three have adopted an in-person hybrid model and all are welcoming students back with open arms and excitement at being together again.

Orinda schools opened TK through second

grade, as well as sixth grade, on Feb. 10, while third through fifth grades returned Feb. 16; Moraga opened its schools for TK through sixth grade on Feb. 16; and Lafayette is opening TK through fifth grade on Feb. 18.

Lafayette and Moraga are following a similar hybrid model for their elementary school students while Orinda has implemented a different hybrid schedule.

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Multiple PG&E projects pursued throughout Moraga



PG&E roadwork on Camino Pablo across from JMIS

Photo Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

Drivers in Moraga can't help but notice all of the roadwork popping up

around town. While the projects belong to Pacific Gas and Electric Company, there is nary a familiar baby blue utility vehicle in sight. That is because PG&E has contracted out to various companies for the specialized jobs while it continues to supervise.

Of the three major projects, two are continuations from last year. The first is pavement restoration on Larch Avenue, with site contractor ALB. "After recently completing a gas safety and reliability project in Moraga, PG&E is working to restore pavement in the area of the job," explained PG&E spokesperson Tamar Sarkissian. "The project required boring and limited trenching to safely replace underground gas distribution main and service lines." The project was delayed due to inclement weather, but has

since begun the second week in February. If the weather cooperates, Larch Avenue residents should see its completion within a month. PG&E does not expect any traffic issues or road closures.

The other project currently taking place along Moraga Road is a carry-over from last June, with contractor Veteran Power Inc. "The electric system hardening project is a continuation of PG&E's Lafayette Saint Mary's Road project," said Sarkissian. "These projects upgrade and strengthen PG&E's electric system in communities throughout Northern and Central California where wildfire risks are highest, including parts of Alameda and Contra Costa counties."

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Council tackles backup generator noise concerns, amends ordinance



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By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette leaders are set to pass an amendment to the city's noise ordinance, which will exempt generators during power outages in the daytime hours, and for those with medical requirements at night too.

The vote was unanimous at the Feb. 8 city council meeting, minus Cam Burks who was not present.

Lafayette Planning and Building Director Greg Wolff explained that since the second half of 2020 the city saw a marked increase in applications for whole-house backup generators as people sought to safeguard energy sources during Pacific Gas and Electric Company's preventative public safety power shutoff events that have become expected during fire season throughout the Bay Area. However this increase in applications for backup generators coincided with a significant uptick in noise complaints, prompting the city's deci-

sion to look at the issue.

According to the staff report, internal combustion engines are fueled by natural gas supplied through a plumbed pipe to power backup generators. When a power outage occurs, an automatic cutoff switch is triggered which disconnects the building from the grid, the engine starts, and power is supplied by the generator until power is restored to the grid. Such generators also require "exercising" of the engine on a weekly basis to keep it in good running order.

Wolff explained in his staff report that sound mitigation equipment such as Zombie Boxes, concrete block walls, and fences with acoustical panels inside installed around generators have proved effective, but the council heard from members of the public that such measures are expensive, and they urged the council to vote for an option exempting generators.

Lafayette resident Jim Benford said that by making the permitting process

slow and expensive the city is encouraging people to use portable generators, which are, he said, ubiquitously louder.

In his public comment Lafayette resident Keith Trimble noted that portable generators are more of a problem, often not hooked up safely and said that a proper, inspected generator is preferable, drawing attention to a fire in Oakland last year that was the result of an overloaded portable generator.

The council, while keeping in mind the need for residents to be able to enjoy their homes in peace, and to be able to open their windows at night especially if they don't have air conditioning, saw no need to raise the city's permitted noise level, opting instead to allow for an exemption during power outages from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. and allowing continued use for those requiring power for medical needs round the clock during power outages. Generators would also be exempt during routine, minimally-required "exercising."

Mayor reviews challenging year, looks ahead to reopening

By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette Mayor Susan Candell covered five themes during her first State of the City Address, much of it optimistic even following what she referred to as a challenging year; one she said compelled city leaders and community alike to take actions of restoration, recovery and resiliency.

It was certainly a very different format for the mayor's State of the City Address this year – the first time it has ever been held virtually, and, said Candell, hopefully the very last time. But, as Candell later reflected, using a virtual platform for city meetings has had the effect of actually increasing public participation, and no doubt her message will reach a bigger audience this year as people joined in from home and still others will view the

recording.

The Feb. 11 meeting took an expanded format virtually this year, with musical entertainment provided by Scott Lindorfer and Rachel Dunsweiler. And this year all the city government heads of departments gave brief updates. The meeting was co-hosted by the Chamber of Commerce, and this year for the first time featured an opportunity for Q&A.

Candell expressed pride in the city staff and for what has been done to address the pandemic, noting that the initial decision to cut \$1 million from each department, and instigate a hiring freeze in anticipation of a shortfall, has left the city budget remaining solid and without the need to tap into reserves.

The mayor reported that the city's Business Assistance Program set up last year and

overseen by Townsend Public Affairs staff, had now helped local businesses and nonprofits navigate the rounds of federal stimulus packages, to the tune of almost \$1.8 million, and she was looking forward to another possible package in March.

Candell also expressed pride in the city's dialogue on policing and efforts toward achieving a more diverse, equitable and inclusive Lafayette, pointing to the formation of the Equity and Inclusion Task Force with its three-prong approach, working together with schools, and the Public Safety Task Force. She noted progress being made by City Manager Niroop Srivatsa and others working on the formation of a Community Behavior Crisis Response Team in a partnership between cities and the county, in order to provide a team of experts to handle de-escalation in mental

health crises.

Candell gave a quick update too on the ongoing protests on the El Curtola overpass, which she described as "the issue that keeps me up at night," (see related story page A3) before moving onto a report on the city's General Plan update, currently underway.

Noting that Lafayette's Regional Housing Needs Allocation has most recently been put at 2,100 housing units to be built between 2023 and 2031 – a 20% increase with 60% of those affordable – Candell questioned whether allocations made pre-COVID should still be applicable. The city is studying, she said, where it could rezone to accommodate the housing, for example along Deer Hill Road, and she said she is closely watching the progress of bills such as SB9, and SB10, both of which would allow more units

on currently-zoned single family lots.

Candell said that the topic is hot and challenging in all directions. "My personal belief," she said, "is that Lafayette deserves the correct allocation from our state. We should pursue finding the truth and we must hold our state officials accountable for producing accurate results based on reality." The mayor encouraged everyone to become informed on the topic and to give input to the General Plan Advisory Committee.

Looking ahead, Candell said she is hoping to hear ideas on reopening the city for discussion at the annual Tri-Cities Meeting in March.

With hopes that by next year she would be enjoying the event in person with her fellow council members, Candell brought her remarks to an end.



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City seeks to maintain traffic safety during overpass protests



Protestors on the El Curtola Pass on Feb. 10. Photo Pippa Fisher

By Pippa Fisher

The discussion about dangers posed to freeway traffic versus first amendment rights on a Lafayette overpass broadened as the council heard from various agencies and looked for possible ways to mitigate threats to traffic safety and neighborhood nuisance, such as installing shade cloth or slats to reduce visibility from the road, and by requesting protesters park their cars on the north side of the bridge to reduce the impact on neighborhood residents.

The El Curtola overpass has been the regular scene of pro-Trump rallies since August 2020, periodically attracting counter protests. Protesters affix signs to the fence to attract the attention of drivers below and have used bullhorns and amplified music. City manager Niroop Srivatsa reported that the LPD has received numerous calls for service during this time, including recently when a sign was thrown over the bridge onto the freeway by someone not associated with the protest, and on another occasion in response to an accident thought to be the result of distracted driving.

Lafayette Chief of Police Ben Alldritt, California Highway Patrol Captain Ben Moser, and California Department of Transportation Maintenance Manager Will Hauke joined the city council Feb. 8 for the discussion. The bridge is owned by CalTrans, freeway safety issues caused on the bridge are the responsibility of the CHP, and the bridge is maintained by the city of Lafayette.

Hauke explained that CalTrans follows law that does not permit commercial signs or flags to be affixed and noted that the agency does not allow permits for demonstrations on overpasses, although he pointed out they are not responsible for enforcement. Alldritt said that organizers have been willing to engage with the PD.

Moser explained the CHP is currently monitoring traffic in the area and looking at data, prompting Vice Mayor Teresa Gerringer to ask, "What's the point at which it becomes such a safety issue that you can then

step in and do something else to manage it?"

Council Member Carl Anduri said that no matter what group is protesting, commercial advertising is prohibited because it is a distraction and that political speech is no different and asked Moser, "It only takes one distracted driver to cause an incident that we're all going to regret. How do you make that judgment?"

Anduri said that he could not understand why, when it was their intent to break the law and affix signs, it can't be stopped. "If it's not allowed, why isn't there interaction with the people ... to encourage them not to violate the law?" Moser said the CHP would be willing to engage with the organizers.

Members of the public weighed in on both sides, with residents who live in the area complaining about the noise nuisance, feeling threatened, and the protesters not wearing masks, and from protest organizer Lisa Disbrow who explained they try to work with the community. She said she monitors the noise level and has no problem with keeping it down. Disbrow said that following a request two weeks ago from the council they now stick to one side of the sidewalk, and have not used bullhorns since Nov. 4.

The group meets every Monday and Friday afternoon and currently plans to continue through the end of February.

Calling for the CHP to increase its monitoring, Mayor Susan Candell said that especially after the two recent incidents on the freeway, "I find it concerning that we know that they (incidents) happen and somehow that's not a threshold," adding that she expects clarity on where the CHP's threshold is on freeway safety.

Candell confirmed with Hauke that he would look into fencing or slats for the bridge in place of the current chain-link, to reduce visibility to drivers and to make it hard to attach signs and flags illegally. She thanked protesters for staying on the one side of the bridge and asked them to park in the future on the other side of the highway, to lessen the impact on neighbors.

Lafayette school district approves racial equity policy

By Pippa Fisher

Lafayette School District has unanimously adopted a board policy focused on racial equity.

The vote was taken at the Feb. 2 special meeting of the school board. It has come out of the district's ongoing broader work on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Each school in the district

has an active DEIB committee. The work has been in progress since the first DEIB committee formed in 2017 at Burton Valley Elementary School, but according to LafSD Governing Board President Rob Sturm, the work to get a policy adopted ramped up this past year. "I would say that work has accelerated and been more focused and proactive."

... continued on Page A9



Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, Feb. 22, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel:
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Planning Commission Meeting

Tuesday, March 1, 7 p.m.
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Design Review

Wednesday, Feb. 24, 7 p.m. Zoom
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
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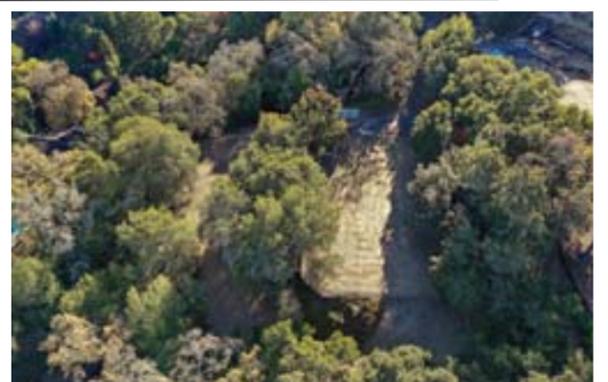
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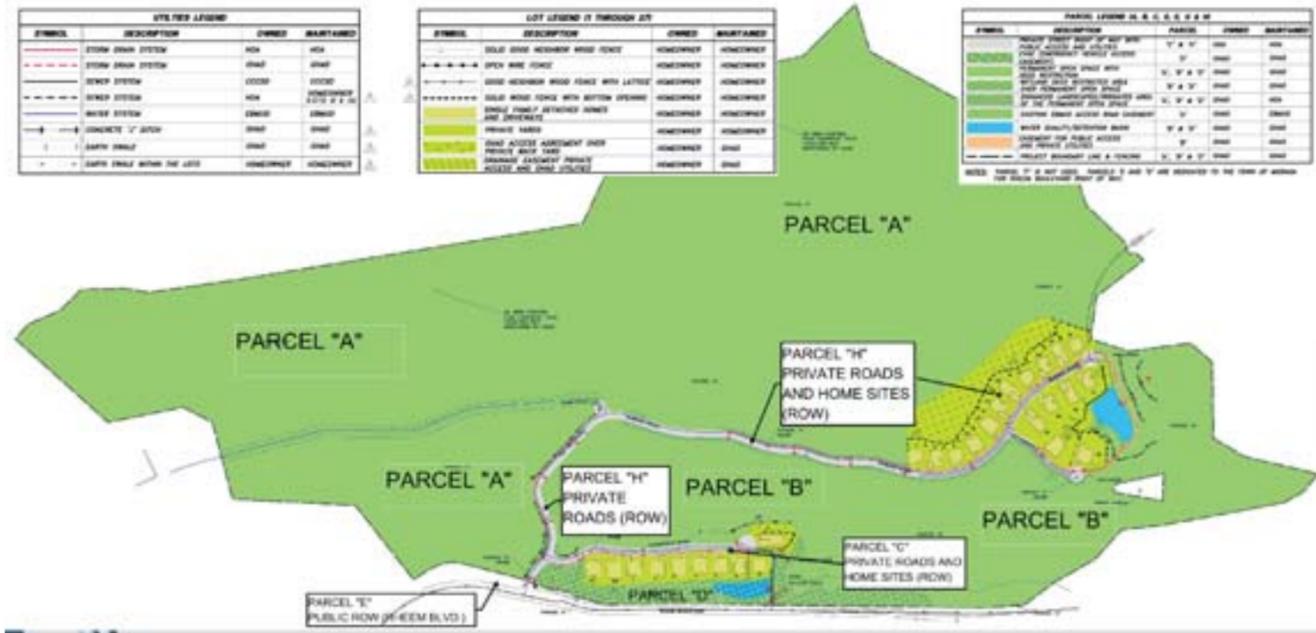


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Bellavista subdivision improvements completed



Map of Bellavista subdivision

Courtesy Moraga Public Works Department

vate) in order for the subdivision to be accepted as complete.

The Public Improvements included items such as roadway pavement, storm drain systems, utilities, concrete curb, gutter, sidewalks, signage and striping within Parcels E and G. The improvements have been completed and are recommended for acceptance.

The Private Improvements also include roadway pavement, storm drain systems, utilities, concrete curb, gutter, sidewalks, signage and striping, but will be maintained by the Homeowner's Association for Parcels C and H; and by the Geologic Hazard Abatement District for Parcels A, B, and D. These private improvements have also been completed and are recommended for acceptance.

The Landscape Improvements (private) include trees, plants, shrubs, irrigation systems, drainage systems, lighting, and fencing on Parcels A, B, C, D, and H. They will be maintained by either the HOA or the GHAD depending on established responsibilities. These landscape improvements have been completed and are also recommended for acceptance.

In early 2018, town staff was contacted by residents living on Birchwood Drive who were concerned about the project's impact to them. After frequent meetings with staff, SummerHill and Birchwood residents, an understanding was met. SummerHill agreed to relocate certain traffic signs and trees along Sonora Road ridgeline that were viewable from Birchwood Drive.

Inspections were conducted in January by Moraga's Public Works Department regarding the three subdivision improvements identified in the SIA and were determined to be complete and satisfactory.

On Feb. 10, the town council voted 3-1 (Council Member Teresa Onoda was the no vote) and 1 recuse (Council Member Renata Sos) in favor of accepting as complete the Bellavista Subdivision improvements; and accepting Parcels E and G for roadway right-of-way purposes. The Notices of Completion will be recorded, at which point the one-year warranty period will begin for the associated improvements.

Following the one-year period, town staff will once again inspect the improvements and will require the developer to make any necessary repairs. Staff will then return to the town council with a recommendation to adopt a resolution accepting the warranty period completion and authorize the release of the developer's cash deposit and warranty bonds.

By Vera Kochan

After years of negotiations and public input, the Moraga town council Feb. 10 voted to accept the Bellavista subdivision as complete. An initial planning application by Summerhill Homes, LLC was originally submitted in February 2005 for the project – a 35-lot single-family residential project meant to include associated open space and additional public amenities, entitled Rancho Laguna II. Following six years of submittal reviews, public input and hearings, revisions and appeals, Moraga's town council approved a 27-lot single-family residential subdivision in January 2011, for the approximately 179-acre property.

Bellavista is subdivided into Parcels A through H comprising of 27 private lots, common areas, open space, private roadways, public right-of-way and trails. The development offers many important town benefits such as: maintaining open views of the valley, hillside and crest as seen from Rheem Boulevard with no significant impact on other public views; preservation in perpetuity of approximately 162-acres of open space with public trails at no cost to the town; stabilization and repair of Rheem Boulevard along the entire project frontage; creation of a sustainable green community that achieves at least 90 Green Points under the Green Building Program; improved access for Moraga-Orinda Fire District to open space on the project site and adjoining properties; and decreased storm water flows downstream in the intermittent drainage behind homes along Rheem Boulevard.

In June 2015, the town council authorized the town manager to execute three Subdivision Improvement Agreements for: 1) Public Improvements; 2) Private Improvements; and 3) Landscape Improvements (pri-

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Town Council Wednesday, Feb. 24, 7 p.m.
Planning Commission: TBA
Park and Recreation Commission: Tuesday, March 16, 7 p.m.,
Moraga School District Board Meetings: Special Board Meeting Tuesday, March 9, 6 p.m.
www.moraga.k12.ca.us See also AUHSD meeting page A2



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Town bids farewell to retiring Chamber executive director

By Vera Kochan

Anyone who replaces Moraga Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kathe Nelson will have some very big shoes to fill. Nelson announced her retirement in January, and according to the Chamber's board of directors president, Brandi Ford, the search continues for someone to carry the torch.

Nelson has been with the chamber for 10 years, serving as ambassador for Moraga's businesses. She has promoted the "Shop Moraga First" ideology, helped to create the town's first special Commercial Zoning District, and worked tirelessly on the annual Moraga Community Fair, Moraga's Farmers' Market, the Chamber Golf Tournament, business marketing studies, a Chamber Directory

(to aid residents in locating local businesses), and helped to promote a town/gown relationship with Saint Mary's College students by encouraging them to shop locally.

Along with her husband, Walter, the Nelsons plan to move to Oregon to live out their golden years. Making note of that, the members of board recently posted well wishes to Nelson on social media: "Thank you for managing our chamber for the past 10 years, for your work with all the merchants, non-profits and college here in town. Our best to you and Walter in your retirement."

Mayor Mike McCluer proclaimed Feb. 10 Kathe Nelson Day and joined the other council members and town staff in thanking Nelson and wishing her a happy retirement during the council's meeting.

"Moraga is a very special community," stated Nelson. "It runs on the participation of volunteers and a very loyal, small business base. I'm proud to have been a small part in the development and advantageous changes to the business community through the support of the town and through the council, and for that we are deeply grateful."

"Moraga and the business community will always hold a very special place in my heart," continued Nelson, "and I look forward to checking in and learning about the fruition of the Moraga Specific Plan; the growth and community support of our local businesses; and the continued cooperation of the town and the chamber in making the business community even stronger and more supported by the community."

Education foundation donations critical for high school student wellness during pandemic



Photo Shirley DeFrancisci

By Jenn Freedman

Wellness Centers on high school campuses are a powerful investment in the health and academic potential of students, and are especially critical during this unpredictable, stressful time. Distance learning and the accompanying isolation has exacerbated mental health issues at local high schools, and the Wellness Centers are operating at capacity. Although education foundation fundraising has been challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting student wellness has never been more crucial.

All four Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) high schools – Acalanes, Miramonte, Campolindo, and Las Lomas – have Wellness Centers staffed with counselors, thanks to ongoing local support through donations to education foundations. The centers opened in 2017-18 in response to the rise of teen anxiety, depression, suicide, and stress. The centers provide increased early interventions for students experiencing social-emotional or mental health challenges that may be affecting learning in the classroom.

Wellness programs have a proven ability to support students with academics and increase engagement in the school community. Each Wellness Center offers individual/group counseling (primarily telehealth with limited in-person), crisis support, and other interventions aimed at addressing a multitude of teen-related issues: stress, depression, bullying, gender questions, grief, drug/alcohol abuse,

and anxiety. They also offer group sessions for parents/guardians and training for teachers and staff.

AUHSD Superintendent, Dr. John Nickerson, explains, "The origin of our Wellness Centers are rooted in declining mental health data we have seen with our students. Adolescence brings so many challenges today that that didn't exist even 10 years ago. Given there is no state funding for the degree of mental health support our students need, the support of our education foundations has been absolutely critical to advance toward our vision for the Wellness Centers. And we were seeing some signs of modest improvement in mental health data since the Centers have been open. With the pandemic, however, the social-emotional and mental health needs of our students have increased dramatically. Our education foundation support for the Centers has never been so important for our students."

During distance learning, Wellness Centers have adapted their programs and outreach to optimize student support. All four centers visited virtual classrooms in the fall to ensure every freshman and sophomore had a face-to-face experience. Wellness teams have also shared curriculum about suicide prevention and awareness to all students.

School sites are also adapting to the specific needs of their

students. For example, at Campolindo High School, the Wellness Center offers lunchtime Zoom hangouts each week, including a ninth-grade hang to connect with other freshmen, a LGBTQ+ hangout, and a vision board hangout. The Acalanes High School center also offers wellness classes and activities like journaling, games, and mindfulness practice. Miramonte's Wellness Center recently surveyed students and is now developing affinity spaces for specific student groups like Students of Color Group and LGBTQ+ Group. And the Las Lomas High School center is implementing mindful Monday classes and is also training peer educators for tobacco use prevention.

While the Wellness Centers are sufficiently supporting student needs during distance learning, the demands will shift and increase as schools shift back to in-person learning. Assistant Superintendent Amy McNamara warns, "We're taking a deep breath, knowing that it will be very challenging when students return to campus in the fall. Chaos in households from job loss and social isolation, and the trauma that comes with loneliness are all factors that we will need to address with students when they return."

Each education foundation raises funds for the town's school district serving students from TK through eighth grade, as well as the town's high school. These foundations are connected through their mutual support for the AUHSD. The Moraga Education Foundation supports Campolindo, Lafayette Partners in Education supports Acalanes, Orinda Network for Education supports Miramonte, and Walnut Creek Education Foundation supports Las Lomas.

Community support is critical because of the insufficient state funding public schools receive in Lamorinda. California ranks 41st in the nation for per pupil funding of public schools, and 48th for counselors per student (with 663 students for one counselor).

To donate, go to:
MEF: www.moragaeducation.org
LPiE: www.lpie.org
ONE: www.oneorinda.org
WCEF: www.wcef12.org

Multiple PG&E projects pursued in Moraga

... continued from Page A1

Hardening work includes the installation of stronger and more resilient poles, using covered power lines that are thicker and provide more insulation and other upgraded equipment."

Sarkissian explained why this endeavor is taking so long to complete. "Over the course of the project, PG&E faced some delays due to re-deployment of electric crews to emergencies, including wildfires, wind events and recent mud slides. We thank our Lamorinda customers for their patience and understanding." The work on this particular project is nearly complete with crews working overhead and underground while maintaining COVID guidelines.

A new project that is also underway involves a pipeline replacement in front of

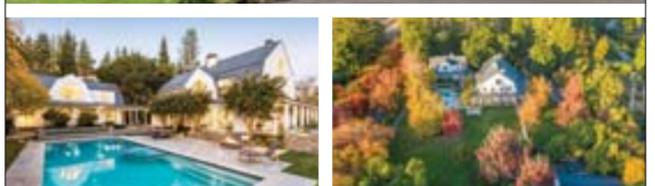
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School. "PG&E recently started a safety and reliability project, safely upgrading gas distribution main and service lines in Moraga," stated Sarkissian. "The replacement project is on Camino Pablo between Canyon Road and Bella Vida Lane, as well as Madsen Court. There are no plans for this work to interrupt gas service." The job is expected to be completed by April (weather permitting) and with no road closures or significant traffic issues. This project's contractor is a mix of PG&E crews and Miller Pipeline.

Moraga's Assistant Engineer Sharon Chan stated, "If you are traveling within any of these areas, please be aware of construction activities and obey all construction signage. We appreciate your patience during construction."



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The Orinda Association:
www.orindaassociation.org

Orinda Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting:
Tuesday, March 2, 7 p.m. By Teleconference Only

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 7 p.m. By Teleconference Only



Orinda selects David Biggs as new city manager



David Biggs Photo provided

By Sora O'Doherty

After an extensive search, Orinda selected Hercules city manager David Biggs to succeed outgoing city manager Steve Salomon. Biggs, who will start with Orinda in April, has a long career in the management of cities in California. He served as city manager in Carson, Tustin, and Morgan Hill, as well as assistant city manager of Redondo Beach and other positions with other California cities. His career also included working in Australia for two and a half years for an industrial development agency. Biggs has been city manager of Hercules for about seven years.

The city council welcomed Biggs on board at its Feb. 2 meeting. Biggs, who had another meeting to attend, made time to join the Orinda meeting. Biggs told the council that he is looking for-

ward to joining them on the fifth of April, and appreciates the vote of confidence. Noting his regional and subregional experience, Biggs feels that he has "a good running start," adding, "Orinda is a beautiful island, but we are integrated." The new city manager invited people in Orinda to stop and chat with him if they see him out walking, which is his favorite lunchtime activity.

Biggs has a BA in political science from California State University at Fullerton and an MBA from UC Irvine. In addition, he completed a certificate program in Continuous Improvement and Quality Management from the UC Santa Cruz extension program. Currently the president of the California Redevelopment Association, Biggs is also an active member of the California Association for Local Economic Development, for which he is a past board member and chair; the International Association of Shopping Centers; and, the International City/County Management Association with a Credentialed Manager designation. In addition, Biggs is a member of the Urban Land Institute. During the effort to develop downtown Orinda, the city received a report from ULI.

There will be no fiscal impact to the hiring of a new city manager, as the position is al-

ready provided for in the current budget. The annual costs as outlined in the employment agreement include: a salary of \$243,000; a car/technology allowance of \$6,000; annual retirement plus Medicare taxes \$42,491; annual Life and LTD estimated at \$1,714; and estimated maximum annual health insurance benefits estimated to be \$26,927.

Biggs is married to Cate, who is from Australia, and they have two sons. Their oldest son, Adrian, works for the city of Palo Alto as assistant engineer. Their youngest son, Dylan, is on a gap year from graduate school and is living in Australia with his uncle.

Biggs welcomed the opportunity to work in Orinda, which means that he won't have to relocate from Hercules. An early riser, he hopes to miss the worst of commute traffic. Biggs says that he grew up, professionally, in the redevelopment track, and sees Orinda as a city with a great start of developing the downtown area, which is says has good bones. "I believe I'll be able to contribute to help enhance downtown," Biggs says. Since city managers get together at least once a month, Biggs knows outgoing city manager Steve Salomon, and also knows members of the city council as well as city staff members. He acknowledges that Salomon's footsteps

will be tough to step into.

Hercules and Orinda are cities with similar characteristics, according to Biggs. Both cascade down from the hills, although Hercules borders the San Pablo Bay. Hercules has a somewhat larger population, at around 25,000, than Orinda. Both Contra Costa County cities have big issues with fire safety. Biggs remarked that he walks most days at lunch, often along the densely wooded Ohlone Creek. Hercules also has Refugio Valley Creek, a permanent creek that runs through the city.

Biggs has worked on a lot of challenges facing local government, including policing issues. Along with the Hercules police chief, he has hosted two town halls, and continued to engage with the community. He has been working on an update of Hercules' safety element of general plan, as well as the hazards mitigation plan. Hercules is at the intersection of Highway 4 and Highway 80, and has a big transit center, so Biggs has enjoyed working relations with BART.

The start date in April is influenced by the fact that Biggs' contract with Hercules requires 60-days notice. Biggs says he is looking forward to starting work in Orinda, which he believes will be a very good fit.

Orinda appoints new oversight commission to monitor sales tax spending

By Sora O'Doherty

When Orinda voters agreed on a new, increased sales tax, part of the equation was the formation of a new oversight committee that will monitor how the sales tax funds are being spent by the city. To accomplish this goal, the city disbanded the existing Citizen's Infrastructure Oversight Commission and has now appointed 10 members of the Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission (SSTOC).

Over the course of a weekend, the city council spent a day and a half inter-

viewing 40 applicants for the new Commission. At the Feb. 2 city council meeting they announced that the following members have been selected: Kyle Arteaga, Brad Barber, Chris Decareau (a former CIOC Commissioner), Jud Hammon (the immediate past chair of the CIOC), Rochelle Latimer, Yasmin Lee, Melanie Light, Latika Malkani, Paula Reinman and Alex Weinstein. Hammon was named temporary chair of the new commission, which is to select a chair the first time they meet.

Mayor Amy Worth expressed the council's thanks to all applicants, saying the city

is "so fortunate to have so many outstanding applicants." She noted that it was a tough decision, but that the council worked hard "to establish a balance, to incorporate diversity and to select members with a variety of experiences."

In December the city council took steps to establish the commission, as was required by the election measure adopting the new supplemental sales tax. The 10-member commission will meet at least quarterly and set a regular meeting schedule. The primary objectives and purposes of the commission will be, with respect to rev-

enue generated from the voter approved sales tax, to make recommendations and provide advice to the city council and city staff on planned expenditures for priority programs, services and projects and to review, monitor, and report on the expenditures incurred. Priority programs, services, and projects are to include efforts to reduce the threat of wildfire, disaster planning and emergency response, critical public storm drainage infrastructure, and long-term road repair and maintenance.

Orinda wins grant to install solar panels, battery storage at community center

By Sora O'Doherty

The city of Orinda has won a very large grant and the city council has unanimously approved the installation of a new system of solar panels and a battery backup for the community center. One of three scenarios offered to the council, the adopted scenario, which was recommended by staff, also keeps the existing generator in place for use when peak usage must be provided. The main purpose of the system is to assure access to power for residents during public safety power shutoffs, during which the city opens

the community center to allow residents to access power.

The total cost of the system will be \$317,551, of which \$217,551 is from a state grant and \$100,000 will come from general capital project funds. The staff report was introduced Feb. 2 by Larry Theis, Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Works, and was prepared by Senior Engineer Siva Natarajan. Currently the energy costs for the community center are \$20,000 per year. With the new system it is estimated that the city can save \$133,000 over the next 20 years. Staff also looked at the possibility of installing solar panels on the library, and recommend that it be considered as part of future updates to the library. Solar power could offset about 33% of the energy the building requires.

The staff report pointed to the advantages and disadvantages of the scheme. Due to the

availability of both solar and fossil fuel systems, there is minimum to no potential for exceeding the generation capacities. There will be redundant power available even during inclement weather conditions when there is a potential for the solar system to not generate enough power to replenish the battery. Integrating the existing diesel generator will eliminate the lack of reliability compared to a purely solar system, without adding additional costs to the project. Although the option adopted is the lowest cost option, it does have the disadvantages of being partially dependent on fossil fuel.

The plan adopted also provides for the installation of a Tesla power wall battery storage for backup power. Council Member Inga Miller thanked Theis and Natarajan for what she called a phenomenal staff report and presenta-

tion. She said it was an example of the discretion that staff uses in only applying for grants the City is likely to get. "Of course," she added, "I want to go with something totally green, but at the end of the day, the best choice is to follow the staff's recommendation." She acknowledged that the scheme is "not the most green, but fits the budget and makes our residents safest during PSPS because we have the backup generator."

Vice Mayor Dennis Fay agreed that it was the sensible approach. While delighted that the city got a grant and can move forward, Fay wondered if the system is flexible enough to allow the city to avail of better batteries that might be developed in the future. Natarajan assured him that it is. Mayor Amy Worth noted that the grant was very competitive, and Orinda was very fortunate to have received it.

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Artify Orinda

Mayor Amy Worth has been honoring the Artify Orinda Initiative of the Lamorinda Arts Council by using one of the recent installations as her background during city council Zoom meetings.

The painting, "Sunrise from Rim Trail" by artist Judy Fine is one of three that have been added to the art niches in the side of CVS Pharmacy on Moraga Way in the Theatre District. The Artify Orinda Initiative is chaired by Maggie Boscoe.

The Orinda Garden club will be planting flowers in planter boxes below the art. Worth thanked the Arts Council, the Orinda Community Foundation for their support of this project, and the Orinda Parks & Recreation staff who worked closely with the artists and the Arts Council to make this happen.



"Sunrise from the Rim Trail" Artist Judith Feins. Look for 13 animals. Photo Sora O'Doherty

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Lamorinda Arts Council features Leon Kennedy in celebration of Black History Month

By Sora O'Doherty

In celebration of Black History Month, the Lamorinda Arts Council is presenting a virtual exhibit of Leon Kennedy's paintings. The exhibit is entitled "Twelve Apostles," so named because the artist loves the church he attends – out of doors during COVID-19 – and loves painting the people he meets as he walks around Oakland.

"My dream is to connect to all the people's dreams," Kennedy says. Born in Houston, but an Oakland resident for some time, Kennedy is a self-taught artist. According to John Hildenbrand, Kennedy's agent, "Once you are familiar with Leon Kennedy's paintings, you'll recognize his work

anywhere."

Kennedy has frequent shows and workshops at Oakland Public Library branches. On Feb. 18, the St. Mary's Center will host Kennedy in a virtual Zoom meeting from 11 a.m. to noon honoring Black History Month and celebrating the music and art of Oakland. Participants may join with meeting ID 857 0496 8720 and pass-code 472245; Those who wish to attend the Zoom meeting are requested to RSVP to jcastillo@stmaryscenter.org.

The Art Gallery at Wilder is managed by the Lamorinda Arts Council

and is located in the Wilder Art & Garden Center at 20 Orinda Fields Lane in Orinda. Owing to the pandemic, it is currently closed.

The Art Gallery at the Orinda Library is honoring the educators who mentor the kindergarten through eighth grade student participants in Arts Ambassadors programs. Each spring, AA artwork fills the entire library gallery. Because COVID-19 restrictions prohibited this year's event, the Lamorinda Arts Council decided to celebrate 15 art educators who make it all happen.



Leon Kennedy: "Thank God for Giving Me My Heart" 18"x24", acrylic on canvas

Both galleries may be viewed at <https://lamorindaarts.org/online-galleries/> Leon Kennedy's art is also displayed on his website www.leonkennedy.com

A COVID-19 vaccination Q&A



Photo provided

Dr. May Lin administers vaccine to office manager Aryana Davani.

By Jenn Freedman

The COVID-19 vaccination rollout has been a bit bumpy so far, causing confusion and frustration for some in the community. To help, Lamorinda Weekly connected with Contra Costa Health Services as well as two local doctors, May Lin, D.O., family medicine physician and local mom, and Andrew Min, M.D., pediatrician and local dad, to answer some common vaccine questions.

Lamorinda Weekly (LW): Can you explain the tiers for rollout and the confusion and inconsistencies in who is prioritized to be vaccinated?

Dr. Lin: The tiers for rollout are meant to prioritize high risk groups. It has been confusing due to frequent updates and different strategies by different counties, which is determined by supply. There have also been inconsistencies when comparing county and state websites with respect to vaccine eligibility, which make it unclear for those administering vaccines to know which set of guidelines to follow. For example, as of Feb. 4, California Department of Public Health states that teachers are eligible for vaccination, but CCHS does not yet offer vaccines to teachers at this time.

LW: When can teachers/school staff in Lamorinda be vaccinated?

CCHS: Contra Costa is evaluating when additional groups may become eligible for immunization in the county. It depends on the supply of vaccine to the county and our progress vaccinating currently eligible groups.

LW: Currently vaccines are for adults. Will there be a vaccine for kids in the future? Should teenagers get the current vaccines?

Dr. Min: The current recommendations are for those 16+ to receive Pfizer and 18+ for Moderna, but ongoing studies are looking at safety of these vaccines for kids so hopefully in the next few months we will get more information on safety in younger children.

LW: I heard that there is a limited supply of the vaccine. Is there a chance that it will run out in between my first and second dose?

CCHS: Anyone vaccinated in Contra Costa can either make an appointment for their second dose at the same time they make an appointment for their first dose or will receive the information they need to make a second-dose appointment when they receive their first dose.

LW: Would I be immune if I only got one dose?

Dr. Lin: Getting one dose will give you some immunity but getting two doses of the currently available vaccines is the best method for immunity. For the Pfizer vaccine, the first dose provides 52%

immunity; the second dose takes efficacy to 95%. For the Moderna vaccine, the first dose provides 80.2%; the second dose 95.6%.

LW: If I have an underlying condition like diabetes, obesity, asthma, or high blood pressure, is it safe for me to take the vaccine? If I take blood pressure and/or cholesterol medication, does the vaccine impact that?

Dr. Lin: Yes, if you have an underlying health condition it is even more important to take the vaccine as you are at risk of getting sicker if you contract the virus. It is safe to take the vaccine even if you take blood pressure or cholesterol medication. If you take a blood thinner, we may need to hold pressure after administering the vaccine and some facilities may choose to monitor you for longer than the 15 minute requirement.

LW: Can I still carry and spread COVID-19 to others if I have the vaccine?

Dr. Lin: Yes, you can still be a carrier and transmit the virus even if you have finished the vaccine schedule. This is why it will still be necessary to wear a mask, social distance, and to practice hand hygiene to protect others and because the vaccine does not guarantee 100% immunity.

LW: How long am I immune once I take the vaccine?

Dr. Min: Nobody is certain how long immunity lasts after vaccination. Based on some research, there is hope that it will be multiple years, but the appearance of new variants complicates things.

LW: Is there anyone besides children who should not receive the COVID vaccine?

Dr. Lin: If you have a life threatening allergy or anaphylaxis to previous dose of COVID vaccine, polysorbate, or PEG polyethylene glycol. All of these reactions are extremely rare. Most people should get the vaccine including those with chronic conditions.

LW: Where can I go to get the most reliable information?

CCHS: Residents can visit the CCHS website for the latest information on COVID-19 (see below).

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Note: information about the COVID-19 vaccine changes regularly. For the latest information, go to www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/.

County fire agencies collaborate to expand vaccine distribution



Photo courtesy ConFire

Fire Protection District, have joined forces to host public vaccination clinics for eligible county residents.

Though the initial fire-hosted clinics were held in early February in Hercules, Brentwood and San Ramon, Lamorinda residents were welcome to schedule appointments at any of the new clinic locations. This comes as good news for many Lamorinda residents after the Stanley Middle School vaccination site in Lafayette was abruptly shut down late last month.

All of the clinics across the county – including these new ones – take patients by appointment only. Eligibility is determined by Contra Costa Health Services, and criteria can be reviewed and appointments made at the de-

partment website (www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/vaccine).

“As providers of emergency medical services across the county, our fire agencies are proud to be able to increase vaccine distribution in order to help further protect the communities we serve,” ConFire Deputy Chief Aaron McAlister said in a statement.

“This multiagency collaboration includes fire and law enforcement agencies, Contra Costa Health Services, community organizations and many volunteers.”

Initial delivery of vaccinations was set at 500 daily per clinic, with the number of doses jumping to 1,000 or more based upon availability and CCHS guidance.

Employees prepare for first fire-hosted vaccination site, Feb. 1 in Hercules

By Nick Marnell

As the county health department promised in January, firefighters have taken on a large role in the distribution

of the COVID-19 vaccine throughout Contra Costa County. The nine county fire agencies, including the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the Contra Costa County

Fire District Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Feb. 17, 6 p.m.
For meeting times and agendas, visit www.mofd.org

ConFire

Board of Directors
Tuesday, March 9, 1:00 p.m.
For meeting times and agendas, visit www.cccfpd.org



Lafayette intent on improving neighborhood wildfire mitigation

By Nick Marnell

For a city that a fire chief once said kept him up at night because of the potential for a massive wildfire, Lafayette lags far behind the two other Lamorinda municipalities in the number of neighborhood groups that are mitigating the risks of such a calamity.

But thanks to efforts of local public officials, the gap between the municipalities is likely to shrink.

The Firewise USA program, a joint offering of three national organizations and sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association, encourages homeowners to take individual responsibility for preparing their homes from the risk of wildfire. According to program materials, Firewise provides resources to help homeowners learn how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourages neighbors to work together to take action now to prevent

losses.

The voluntary program has been around since 2002, has nearly 1,500 active member communities and boasts a participation retention rate of 80% over the past decade. The latest NFPA figures show Orinda with 17 Firewise groups and Moraga with three, with a handful of applications pending.

Lafayette has no Firewise communities, which Mayor Susan Candell vowed to change. “Getting Firewise communities established in Lafayette is my top priority for public safety,” she said.

The mayor concedes that it will require local community leaders to step up, as they have done in Moraga and Orinda. Candell said she has been approached by members of the Orinda Firewise groups “who volunteered to help us set up a Firewise community.”

But the chair of the Lafayette Emergency Preparedness Commission says

it’s been all talk and no action in the city.

“The residents aren’t educated on Firewise,” Duncan Seibert said. “People have talked about it, but there have been no resources allocated to pushing it.”

Seibert placed much of the blame for inaction on the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, whose former fire chief Jeff Carman said that Lafayette was the area of the district that concerned him more than any other for the potential of a devastating wildfire.

“We have interest from maybe a half dozen neighborhoods,” Seibert said. “But we don’t have the information we need to start the Firewise process. We need a commitment from the fire district.”

Fire Marshal Chris Bachman apologized to the commission for the delay and said that ConFire hired a new fire inspector, Taylor King, who has been assigned to coordi-

nate the district Firewise program.

Typically, a neighborhood of at least eight properties that desires Firewise designation will contact its fire agency, which sends a representative to a community meeting to help do a written wildfire risk assessment of the properties. The representative looks for ways the property owners are hardening – and plan to harden – their properties in order to prevent the structures from burning down.

The assessment takes about an hour and a half. The fire agency helps the neighborhood group write up the document, which includes a three-year wildfire mitigation action plan, and the assessment is included with the community application to the NFPA. Once the application is approved, the community is awarded its Firewise designation. The community must reapply each year to retain its status and needs to update its

wildfire mitigation action plan every three years.

“The national Firewise USA recognition program is an important tool for our residents in wildfire prone areas to work together to reduce wildfire risks in their neighborhoods,” Fire Chief Lewis Broschard said. “We are committed to helping our communities attain and maintain voluntary Firewise certification.”

The ConFire program officially kicked off Feb. 10 with a meeting between King and representatives from the Lafayette Glen Road neighborhood, a potential Firewise community.

Dennis Rein, Lamorinda Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, helped set up Orinda and Moraga Firewise communities. “I think (ConFire officials) will be pleasantly surprised with the community participation in this,” Rein said.

Orinda lawmaker pushes for stronger communication between utilities and fire agencies

By Nick Marnell

Prompted by ordinances enacted in her legislative district, Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan on Feb. 10 introduced Assembly Bill 529, which requires that local fire agencies be alerted to any fire safety, prevention, or mitigation services conducted by electric utilities in high fire-risk areas.

Bauer-Kahan partnered with State Sen. Steve Glazer, both Orinda residents, and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the San Ramon Val-

ley Fire Protection District to author her bill that built on ordinances passed in 2020 by the fire districts.

The ordinances required an electric utility to inform the fire districts before the company engages in work during periods of high fire danger, and requires the utility to notify the districts in advance of that work. The Pacific Gas and Electric Company sued both fire districts over the ordinances, citing an overreach of authority. A judge dismissed the PG&E suit against San Ramon Fire on

procedural issues, and the company settled out of court with MOFD.

“The Moraga-Orinda Fire District is following San Ramon Valley Fire District’s lead in promoting better communication and cooperation between PG&E and local fire agencies. The bill being introduced by Assemblymember Bauer-Kahan goes a long way towards accomplishing this goal and will protect our communities statewide,” MOFD Chief Dave Winnacker said.

The proposed bill does

not prohibit a utility from conducting emergency maintenance work. The bill does require that electrical utilities give 48 hours’ notice to local fire agencies when conducting potentially dangerous maintenance in high fire-risk areas.

“We are incredibly grateful for all the work that our local fire districts do to keep our communities safe, we hope that this bill will be another tool in their arsenal to fight potentially deadly fires,” Bauer-Kahan said.

PG&E had yet to take a

position on the proposed legislation, stating, “While PG&E appreciates the author’s intention, the bill as written appears to stand in contradiction to the commitment PG&E has made with the governor, legislature and our customers to focus on reducing wildfire risk and improving safety throughout our system. We look forward to working with the committees, author and all stakeholders on preventative measures to wildfire mitigation and to build a stronger and safer PG&E.”

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorindaweekly.com

Correction: In the Feb. 3 Lamorinda Weekly article, “Districts move quickly to enable schools to reopen ASAP,” Moraga parent Nicole Smith was speaking for herself, and not on behalf of the large group of Moraga parents she was representing when reading a letter from them to the board, when she asked the Moraga board members to “do right by our kids.”

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Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Jan. 31 - Feb. 6
Alarms 15
911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 5
Traffic 19
Suspicious Circumstances 5
Suspicious Subject 9

Suspicious Vehicle 6
Service to Citizen 22
Patrol Req./Security Check 39
Pubic/School Assembly Check 0
Supplemental Report 10
Vacation House Check 6
Welfare Check 13
Ordinance Violation 1
Vehicle violations
Hit And Run Misdemeanor 10 Block Fiesta Ln.
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Reckless Driving 900 Block Moraga Rd.
St Marys Rd./Las Huertas Rd.
Stolen Vehicle Recovery 3200 Block Old Tunnel Rd.
Tc - Fire And Amb Enroute 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Tc - Minor Injuries Mt. Diablo Blvd./Village Center
Tc - Property Damage Happy Valley Rd./Valory Ln.
Traffic Pursuit Wb Sr 24 At Acalanes Rd.
Other criminal activity
Fraud Credit Card 600 Block Sky Ranch Ct.
Grand Theft 1000 Block Woodbury Rd.
Petty Theft 3800 Block Quail Ridge Rd.
1000 Block Woodbury Rd.
3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Petty Theft From Veh 500 Block St. Mary's Rd.
Robbery Armed 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Shoplift 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)

Nuisance to the Community
Disturbing The Peace El Curtola Blvd./Eb Sr 24
Loud Noise 50 Block Lafayette Cir.
Loud Party 3200 Block Mt. Diablo Ct.
Public Nuisance Reliez Station Rd./Olympic Blvd.
Other
Fish And Game 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Harassment 3600 Block Brook St. (2)
K9 Outside Assist Request Wb Sr 4/Hillcrest Ave., Ant.
Trespass 3400 Block School St. (2)

Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report Jan. 26 - Feb. 8



Alarms 11
911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 9
Traffic 46
Suspicious Circumstances 2
Suspicious Subject 2
Suspicious Vehicle 2
Service to Citizen 34
Patrol Req./Security Check 14
Supplemental Report 5
Vacation House Check 0
Welfare Check 3
Pubic/School Assembly Check 4

Vehicle violations
Auto Burglary Not Available
100 Block Miramonte Dr.
Dui Misd Villa Ln./Hardie Dr.
Excessive Speed Moraga Way/Ivy Dr. (3)
St Andrews Dr./Moraga Way (3)
Moraga Rd./Alta Mesa Dr.
Moraga Way/School St. (2)
Rheem Blvd./Moraga Rd.
Cypress Point Way/St Andrews Dr.
Moraga Rd./Ascot Dr.
Canyon Rd./Moraga Rd.
Moraga Way/Theatre Sq., Ori
Moraga Way/Eastwood Dr., Ori
Canyon Rd./Country Club Dr.
BoFA Parking Lot
Exhibition Of Speed Moraga Commons Park
Tc - Property Damage 1400 Block Moraga Way
10 Block Gloria Ct.
Other criminal activity
Grand Theft 100 Block Fairfield Pl.
Grand Theft From Veh 100 Block Westchester
Identity Theft 20 Block Hardie Dr.
10 Block Crockett Dr.
Petty Theft Not Available
600 Block Augusta Dr.
Residential Burglary 1100 Block Sanders Dr.
Nuisance to the Community
Disturbance-domestic Moraga Rd./Moraga Way
Disturbance-fight

Rheem Valley Shopping Center
Disturbing The Peace Crossbrook Dr./Corliss Dr.
Loud Noise 200 Block Tharp Dr.
Loud Party Not Available
Other
Battery Crossbrook Dr./Corliss Dr.
Failure To Obey Safeway
Harassment Not Available



Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report will be back next time

Letters to the editor

Questions to ask about gas leaf blowers

I, too, dislike the sound and smell of gas powered leaf blowers and I commend the young activists for their concern about air and noise pollution. Having said that, I believe that more research is necessary before final action is taken. Following are some questions that need to be answered: Who are the primary users of gas powered leaf blowers in our community? Is it possible that they are the landscapers who maintain the yards of local residents? How much is a landscaper paid for each yard they “mow and blow”? How many yards must a landscaper service per day in order to earn enough money to live on?

I maintain my own yard with a rake and broom and it takes at least four times longer than if I used a blower. Will residents provide their landscapers access to electricity to power electric leaf blowers?

Noise and air pollution are important but so is the ability to earn a living. The human dimension should be taken into account when considering a prohibition on gas powered leaf blowers. These are difficult times for everyone. Not jeopardizing the ability of someone to earn a livelihood should be a primary consideration. Byrne Sherwood Lafayette

The science behind gas leaf blower pollution

I commend and applaud the three Renton siblings who have taken up the banner of community health and sanity. Thank you for publishing their story!

Recently I sent a letter, and a scientific article supporting my thesis, to the Moraga Town Council regarding the measurement of the polluting capability of just one gasoline powered leaf blower. The science revealed that one leaf blower running for an hour had the same amount of emissions as an automobile driven 1,000 miles.

There is no doubt that we must no longer allow noisy gasoline powered polluting leaf blowers to operate in our communities. Is anyone happy that their neighbor's dust and dirt is being blown into their

yard, and vice versa? There are electric alternatives such as “EGO” products which do a great job.

Cheers to the Renton family!!!
Marcy and Dick Terry
Moraga

More on leaf blowers

Thank you for the front page article on leafblasters. As 40-year residents we have seen our once peaceful community transformed into a war zone by hideously noisy, polluting machines versus perfectly innocent leaves. We offer our enthusiastic support to young activists. Thank you. John and Mona Nygard Lafayette

Shared frustration on leaf blowers

Kudos to the young activists! And to the Lamorinda Weekly for publishing the piece on the hazards of gas leaf blowers.

Last summer, I wrote to each member of the city council and the mayor about this issue and included documentation. I mailed my letters to each one through the U.S. Postal Service. No one responded. I re-sent my letter by e-mail to all the same public servants twice after September. Still no response—not even an acknowledgment of receipt. I am as frustrated as Finn and the other bright kids.

Seeing your coverage gave me some hope if only because more residents may take a position. Where I live, blowers are in use every day, including Saturdays and Sundays. Data has been collected for years about the health hazards of these gas blowers and their overuse. It's time to put a stop to them. Pam-Anela Messenger Lafayette

On climate change

Kudos to Jamie, Scout, and Finn Renton for doing research and persuading their local government to adopt climate-protecting policies! Climate change is the greatest threat to human life everywhere, including here in Lamorinda. A recent study at the University of Cambridge shows that climate change is one of the main factors giving rise to the pandemic we find ourselves in today

(www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/02/210205085718.htm). Environmental changes caused by climate change allow the coronavirus to spread more easily from animals to humans.

You can contribute to the effort to combat climate change by learning more about the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (<https://energyinnovation-act.org/>) and Citizens' Climate Lobby (<https://citizensclimatelobby.org/>). Citizens' Climate Lobby is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to building political support to pass legislation that addresses climate change. The EICDA is the main piece of legislation that CCL is advocating for. This act will place a fee on carbon extraction, and the revenues collected will be paid out as dividends directly to American households. In other words, the large corporations responsible for the majority of emissions will be incentivized to switch to green energy sources, while average Americans like ourselves will reap the benefit of additional income. This will more than offset any price increases - and of course, everyone will benefit from a cleaner, healthier planet for future generations to come!

To make this a reality, we need your support. You can join the Contra Costa chapter of CCL at <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/join-citizens-climate-lobby/>. Let's come together and secure a livable planet for Lamorinda and the rest of the world! Ashley Zhang Moraga

Moraga road work

I guess I should feel grateful that work is being done on our streets, but what is it that's being done? Road construction signs, yellow safety vests, road construction equipment, steel plates, and re-routing give no information to Moraga's citizens as why or what is being done.

Moraga Road is a glaring example of my concern. Why is there a need to dig up the street? It may appear face-

tious to ask, what's going on? Inquiring minds should know. Ed Vasgerdsian Moraga

Vaccinations are a worldwide concern

In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is easy to feel isolated and alone. Many of us have had to abandon our normal understanding of life to stop this deadly virus and make our community safer. With the announcement of multiple vaccines and a coordinated effort on behalf of our county's health department, the end of the pandemic seems much closer.

While vaccines are rolling out in our cities daily and making our community safer by the minute, many places are not so lucky. Nearly one quarter of the world's population will not have access to COVID-19 vaccines from any company until 2022. Middle and low income countries are unable to compete with the buying power of higher income countries and are left unprotected from this deadly virus. This pandemic will not end until every country can slow the spread and the vaccine is the key to stopping the virus.

We have a tremendous amount of power as United States citizens to impact global vaccine relief through legislation. It is so vital that communities like ours advocate for positive change and pressure our political leaders to set a global standard for helping other countries in these extraordinary times. Calling and emailing our representatives in support of global vaccine distribution can make a huge impact on millions of lives. I urge the members of this community to realize the position we are in to help those who are not as fortunate as we are. A thirty second phone call can make all the difference in the world; please be a global citizen and advocate for a pandemic free world today! Theresa Nevins Lafayette

Save Lafayette ad clarification

Save Lafayette, an organization that opposes the Terraces of Lafayette housing project at the corner of Deer Hill and Pleasant Hill Roads in Lafayette, recently published an advertisement seeking donations for its legal battle with the City of Lafayette.

Save Lafayette's ad contained many inaccuracies, and this letter cannot address each one. One particular example, however, requires immediate correction. The City of Lafayette has just embarked on an update of its General Plan, which includes a Housing Element, and the City's future planning efforts must be based on facts. Save Lafayette's ad claimed that Lafayette does not need more housing because the city has "exceeded" its state-mandated affordable housing quota. This is untrue.

In its most recent filing with the State Department of Housing and Community Development and the Office of Planning and Research, the City of Lafayette reported that only 46 very low, low, or moderate-income affordable units have been built in town. And, although we have exceeded our market rate housing quota, an additional 255 affordable units would need to be built in Lafayette by 2022 to meet the current quota. The Terraces project provides 63 affordable units that, when occupied, will count towards Lafayette's quota.

We all want what's right for Lafayette, and we should all have the facts. I would urge residents who wish to understand the facts behind the City Council's approval of the Terraces of Lafayette project to visit the City's webpage at www.lovelafayette.org/terraces. Niroop K. Srivatsa City Manager, Lafayette

Correction: In the Feb. 3 issue of Lamorinda Weekly, in a Letter to the Editor, Yuki Fujimoto was incorrectly listed as the founder of the LafSD DEI Committee. She is a member of the committee, not the founder.

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

Lafayette school district approves racial equity policy

... continued from Page A3

Acalanes Union High School District adopted a racial equity program last summer. Sturm says that while there wasn't coordination with AUHSD, his district leveraged the high school district's policy and approached it as a starting point, adapting it to fit the LafSD. "An extra-

ordinary working group did the heaviest lifting in collaboration with the district, producing the LafSD policy and plans," he said referring to the team of volunteer parents.

The policy identifies six areas - school climate and culture, curriculum and instruction/student engagement, staff capacity, community and relationships, sys-

tems, policies and administration, and accountability.

Sturm says that passing the racial equity policy was an important step for the district and he's proud of the board's unanimous and enthusiastic adoption. "Now we must hold ourselves and our district fully accountable to prioritize and timely execute on the worthy commitments that we made."

Expressing great confidence in the partnership of the DEIB task force, school DEIB committees and the broader support from the community, Sturm says he anticipates making strides to do and be better.

"It's a moral and educational imperative that our school community warmly embraces, celebrates and understands different identities,

backgrounds and experiences, and that we enable all students to feel safe, valued and comfortable being their full selves," says Sturm, adding, "Our ongoing work will mean leaning into difficult conversations; however, I trust our ability to do so with courage and respect."

What will housing in Lafayette look like in 2030?

Tune in to Housing Element 1011

Come meet your General Plan Advisory Committee representative and learn about the Housing Element update process in a remote info session. City staff will provide an overview of what a Housing Element is and does, background on why it needs to be updated, and how it affects your community.

You play a critical part in creating the vision for the future of housing in Lafayette, so it's time to get involved!

Feel free to write in your questions ahead of time to generalplan@lovelafayette.org.

Visit www.PlanLafayette.org to register and learn more about the Housing Element

<p>Burton Valley Thursday, February 18, 2021 6PM</p>	<p>Downtown Thursday, February 25, 2021 6PM</p>	<p>Community Organizations Wednesday, March 3, 2021 6PM</p>
<p>Youth Thursday, March 4, 2021 6PM</p>	<p>Acalanes Valley & Happy Valley Thursday, March 11, 2021 6PM</p>	<p>Reliez Valley Thursday, March 18, 2021 6PM</p>

Not sure which meeting is for you? Visit www.PlanLafayette.org to see the General Plan Advisory Commission District Map and register for online sessions or email generalplan@lovelafayette.org.

Elementary students make slow return to classrooms

... continued from Page A1

In all three districts, returning students have been divided into two equal, balanced stable cohorts (groups), with none being larger than 14 students. Siblings are kept in the same cohort and every attempt was made to have an equal number of boys and girls in each.

Mornings for elementary students in Lafayette and Moraga will be the same as they have been since the beginning of the 2020-21 school year: distance learning with their full class and current teacher. The afternoons, however, will be different. In Lafayette, cohort A will attend in-person classes on Monday and Tuesday from 12:30 to 2:45 p.m. while cohort B will attend at the same time on Thursday and Friday. Moraga's cohort A attends in-person classes Monday and Tuesday from 12:15 to 3 p.m.; cohort B follows the same schedule Thursday and Friday. All students will spend Wednesdays at home distance learning.

Students attending in-person classes will, in most cases, continue with their same distance learning teacher while the cohort is not in school. Those not returning to in-person teaching will likely have a different online teacher in the afternoon.

Both of Orinda's elementary school cohorts will attend in-person classes Tuesday through Friday; Cohort A will meet from 8 to 10:50 a.m. while cohort B will be in class from 12:10 to 3 p.m. Each cohort will continue their distance learning at home when not in class and all students will participate in distance learning on Mondays.

While county guidelines allow for sixth-graders to re-

turn to in-person classes, only Moraga and Orinda are currently making this available. Again divided into two cohorts, Moraga's sixth-graders will attend three one-hour classes every day, with cohort A in person one week and cohort B coming the following week. The cohort not at school will continue distance learning at home.

Sixth-graders attending Orinda Intermediate School will also be broken into two cohorts, with cohort A attending three 1.15-hour in-person classes Tuesday and Thursday and cohort B in school Wednesday and Friday. The middle school students at home will be able to live stream the in-person classes.

Richard Whitmore, Lafayette's superintendent, reported that Stanley Middle School will reopen when Contra Costa County moves back into the red tier.

In order to open their schools, each district had to submit and commit to implementing a COVID-19 Safety Plan (CSP) and Prevention Plan (CPP). These plans spell out very detailed protocols for keeping everyone on campus safe and healthy. In addition to maintaining physical distancing of six feet, everyone on campus must wear masks at all times. Additionally, an online health screening form must be completed and submitted for each student every day. These plans conform to CDC guidelines released Feb. 12.

All three districts received funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for bringing their schools into compliance with the required health and safety standards. These include thoroughly cleaning each campus, professionally cleaning all HVAC systems,

changing and improving air filters, purchasing personal protective equipment, hand washing stations, signage, air purifiers, and ensuring that all windows and doors can open to improve air flow. All classrooms will be cleaned and sanitized daily.

There are also very specific protocols on what to do if anyone on campus either contracts COVID or comes in contact with someone who does.

Getting everything ready for reopening "has been a real challenge," Moraga Superintendent Bruce Burns admits. "But it's all so worthwhile. I'm super excited to see the kids returning ... it may not be a full reopening but it's a good start."

While the majority of Lamorinda parents are happy to be sending their kids back to school, even on the hybrid schedule, there are some who have elected to continue the distance learning through the end of the school year. At this point, approximately 85% of Moraga's students, 80% of Orinda students and 70% of Lafayette's school children will be returning to in-person classes.

There are also some teachers in each district who, for medical or family reasons, elected not to return to in-person teaching. These teachers will continue leading distance learning classes.

With only 3.5 months left in the current school year, it is certainly hoped that the reopenings will be successful and everyone will remain safe and healthy. As Lamorindans look forward to the 2021-22 school year, Whitmore is both hopeful and optimistic that students will be able to return to "something that looks more like traditional school" in August.



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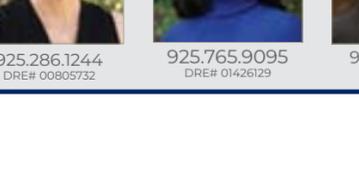
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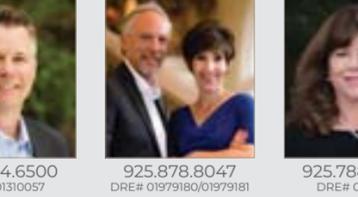
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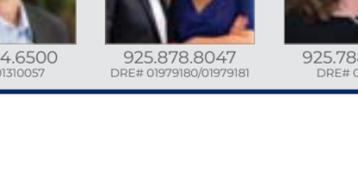
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SMC grad helps Numi Organic Tea make its global mark



Photo provided

Brian Durkee in Jiangxi, China - the country's largest Fair Trade Tea cooperative.

By Vera Kochan

Most would think working for an organic tea company would be all zen, without much strife. But when Brian Durkee, who was recently promoted to CEO after several years serving as the company's president, traveled around the world on behalf of Oakland-based Numi Organic Tea, it was not without its dangerous moments.

On a trip to Egypt in 2011, Durkee was there working on the chamomile and mint products when a revolution took place. "I wasn't allowed to leave the hotel. I had to grow a beard and wore a scarf around my head. When I traveled, I had to have armed guards with me. If something went wrong there was no infrastructure to get us out of

trouble. It was like something out of an Indiana Jones movie!"

Durkee was also in south/western China near Burma when there was increased insurgent activity with Laos. A similar situation occurred in India near far western Assam.

A proud lifelong tea drinker, Durkee earned his MBA from Saint Mary's College in 2011 and lives in Lamorinda with his wife and two children, ages 8 and 4. "The history of my role at Numi is tasting tea from all over the world - how it differs from India to Africa to Asia."

During his 17-year tenure with Numi, Durkee has traveled to over 35 countries, explaining, "We do it to be connected with the community." Much of that connection

comes from Durkee's efforts to "leave the world a better place than we found it."

Having built a large global network of tea farming contacts since Numi's founding in 1999, the tea company finds itself in an ever-growing humanitarian position. Numi tea is produced in accordance with Fairtrade International's rigorous environmental, economic and social standards, which are independently verified through regular audits by an accredited third-party auditor.

One of Durkee's first projects when he started in 2004 was to develop relationships with key farmers. "It created a platform to go beyond. We pay incrementally for them to also distribute funds to empower the community for things like schools," he said. "We've brought farming partners into the fair trade enterprise and currently have more than 14,000 that work for Numi."

Numi is also a B Corp, meaning they are a certified business that meets the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose. "We're a tea company that tries to do good in the world by using tea as a vehicle for that," Durkee said with pride.

The Numi Foundation sponsors many philanthropic efforts. Numi Curriculum is designed to bring gardening, art and social studies to chil-

dren at Title 1 Oakland Unified elementary schools. Another project, Together for H2OPE, partners with global farming communities to ensure clean and safe water access. The program has helped over 6,000 people by decreasing water-borne illnesses a whopping 90%. The foundation's latest effort, COVID-19 Food Relief, provides free, weekly organic produce deliveries to families in need, having distributed over 350,000 pounds to date.

During the pandemic Numi's retail and e-commerce sales have spiked, but Durkee noted, "A lot of Numi's business is in food service such as restaurants, large offices like Google, colleges and universities, and we are an exclusive tea for United Airlines. We took some big hits last year."

Besides leading the Numi team and driving overall company strategy and culture, Durkee has managed strategic partnerships, financial planning and execution, sales and marketing initiatives, global supply chain developments, and product innovation.

As if not busy enough, Durkee has also taken on duties as an adjunct professor at Oakland's California College of the Arts in the Design Strategy MBA program. His classes focus on innovative design, and he has taught Operations Strategy and Systems since 2013. Durkee has also guest lectured at the University of San Francisco (where he re-

ceived a BS in systems management), SMC and UC Berkeley. He looks forward to the day when campuses will reopen for in-person instruction.

"I love to teach in the classroom," he said. "I'd like to do more of that later in my career."

Numi launches new products every year by using unique ingredients. Next month they plan to offer a "wellness" line of teas containing pure, organic herbs that are proven to work when dealing with topics such as congestion, immunity issues, sore throat and detoxification.

Playing a significant role in several initiatives that Numi is known for, Durkee has led efforts to push the Non-GMO Project to change the company's standard on immersion packaging - which includes tea bags. Prior to that, only tea ingredients were included in the standard, allowing manufacturers of GMO-sourced bioplastic tea bags to claim Non-GMO Verification. The company recently launched its first compostable tea wrapper, thereby achieving Climate Neutral certification.

Durkee is proud to be part of an organization with honorable standards. "How do we continue to lead? You can't be risk averse," he said. "What makes Numi different is their commitment to community."

For more information visit: NumiTea.com.

Healdsburg: A happy hamlet for escape



Hotel Les Mars

Photo courtesy Hotel Les Mars

By Fran Miller

The farmer frequented feed stores that once surrounded Healdsburg's central, tree-shaded plaza have been replaced with wine tasting rooms and charming restaurants, yet the agricultural essence of this tiny Sonoma County town persists. Located at the crux of three world-class wine growing regions - the Russian River and the Alexander and Dry Creek Valleys - the proliferation of tasting rooms and farm-to-table cuisine is apropos.

Added to this vinous and gastronomic scene are quaint boutiques, art galleries, and antique shops that seemingly haven't missed a beat over the past tumultuous year. A vibrancy continues to exist in this happy hamlet, making it an ideal spot in which to seek 24 hours of bucolic refuge.

STAY: Central to the town's appeal is Healdsburg Plaza, flanked by lodging, restaurant, and shopping options. Within steps is the elegant Hotel Les Mars, a Relais & Chateaux hotel featuring 16 comfy rooms furnished with stately French antiques, stone-mantel gas fireplaces, and hand-carved canopy beds enveloped in Versai linens. Cararra marble bathrooms feature hydrotherapy

soaking tubs, Bulgari toiletries, and plush robes. A continental breakfast is included and delivered to your room. From dinner reservations, winery tours, and picnics, the Hotel Les Mars staff has the inside track and will happily help you plan an itinerary. They can also help you surprise your significant other with additional in-room treats, such as a flower arrangement, a plate of cookies, chocolate covered strawberries, or artisan cupcakes from nearby Noble Folk Ice Cream & Pie Bar.

DO: Downtown Healdsburg boasts more than 22 galleries, 50 shops and boutiques, 30 wine tasting rooms, and innumerable eateries, most all continuing to operate safely during these trying times. Yet a trip to this bucolic region is not complete without a proper vineyard wine tasting. A drive down nearby Dry Creek Road offers a plethora of options, and for the lovers of sparkling wines, Amista Vineyards is the way to go. The only sparkling producer within the Dry Creek Valley, Amista, its owner's Mike and Vicky Farrow, and winemaker Ashley Herzberg use the traditional Champagne method in crafting Sparkling Blanc de Blanc, Sparkling Syrah, and

Sparkling Grenache, each made from grapes grown on their estate vineyards. They also make estate-grown Chardonnay, Syrah, Grenache and Tres, a GSM blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre, plus Dry Creek Zinfandel and Rockpile Cabernet Sauvignon made with fruit from their nearby Healdsburg neighbors. Enjoy a tasting on their vast, covered patio that overlooks the vines, or grab a glass and take a 20-minute stroll around the vineyard.

DINE: Plaza-adjacent Dry Creek Kitchen has long been Healdsburg's restaurant 'go-to,' and in spite of increased competition from a plethora of celebrated upstarts, it continues to be the gold standard. Celebrity chef Charlie Palmer's paean to Sonoma County and its bounty of both food and wine, Dry Creek Kitchen is perhaps best known for its wine list. Pages and pages feature only Sonoma County labels, both the well-known and the more obscure. Management here enjoys close relationships with local producers, affording the restaurant, and its customers, access to brands not easily found.

... continued on Page B2



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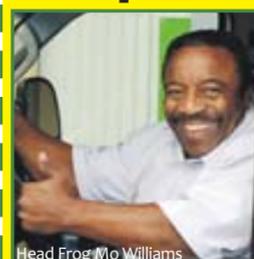
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Wrap up healthy goodness in these roasted veggie crepes



Roasted Veggie Crepes (aka Ratatouille in a Wrap) Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

First, we roast a huge tray of assorted vegetables tossed in olive oil with Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Then we chop it all up, mix it with grated Gruyere cheese and roll it into a freshly cooked crepe. I like to call it "ratatouille in a wrap." It is a dish I could literally inhale, it's that good! I've used an assortment of different vegetables over the years, and we love this combination, but if we are missing your favorite, give it a try

and add it to this recipe. The nutty flavor of Gruyere is perfect with the roasted veggies, but a nice sharp cheddar or even Havarti would also complement the vegetables. You can make this dish either by roasting the veggies or grilling them on the barbecue. Either way, the flavors are delicious as the vegetables begin to caramelize and take on nice brown edges. I especially love grilling big slices of red onion, whenever a recipe calls for onions. If you haven't tried this it's a must! (They are amazing on burgers, too.)

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>



RECIPE

(Makes 6-8 Crepes)

Roasted Vegetables

INGREDIENTS

1 eggplant, cut into large chunks (no need to peel or sweat the eggplant)
1 red or orange bell pepper, stem removed and cut into quarters
2 carrots, (any color or multi-colored) peeled and cut into 2 inch pieces and quartered lengthwise
2 zucchini, cut into 2-inch pieces and halved lengthwise
10 ounces cremini mushrooms, cleaned and cut into quarters (stems and all)
5 Roma or vine-ripened tomatoes, cut in half
2 cloves garlic, peeled
2 large red or yellow onions, peeled and cut into eight or so wedges per onion
2 large shallots, peeled and quartered
2 cups Gruyere cheese, grated (split roughly in half for inside the crepe and half for on top before baking)
1 recipe crepe batter (recipe below)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 425 F.

Clean all veggies and cut into the sizes called for in the ingredient list. You don't have to worry too much about the size, because you will be chopping them anyway. It is mostly designed so they will cook at roughly the same time. Toss with 2 teaspoons Italian herbs, salt and pepper and 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil, to lightly coat all of the veggies before baking.

Prepare a large baking sheet with cooking spray. Spread veggies out onto the prepared baking sheet in a single layer. If you find that you have too many veggies for your tray, don't worry just use a second tray! Roast the vegetables for 30-40 minutes, or until tender and beginning to brown a little on the edges. Turn them with a spatula about halfway through. At this time, you will probably discover that the tomatoes cook faster than everything else. If so, remove them and set aside while the rest of the veggies continue to cook.

Once veggies are all cooked, remove them from oven, cool to room temperature and coarsely chop veggies together. This step can be made a day or two ahead of time and refrigerated in an airtight container.

Crepes

INGREDIENTS

1 cup flour
2 large eggs
1 3/4 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 stick butter (2.oz) for cooking crepes in frying pan

DIRECTIONS

Beat eggs, milk and salt in a bowl. With wire whisk, stir in flour and blend until smooth. Batter should be rather thin.

Heat a small amount of butter over medium heat in an 8- to 10-inch crepe pan or a frying pan with very shallow sides. Drop batter by a soup ladle into the center of the pan and holding the handle, swirl the pan to get the batter to fill in the bottom of the pan. Cook until the crepe looks bubbly and is set enough to flip. This will take about one minute or so. Flip with a large rubber spatula. Cook the second side for just about 30 seconds. Crepes will be like very, very thin pancakes. Repeat until all crepes are cooked. Place each cooked crepe in between sheets of waxed paper until ready to use. Can be made up to two days ahead and refrigerated.

To Assemble Crepes:

Working in batches, lay each crepe out flat on a cutting board. Spoon three heaping tablespoons of veggie mixture into the center of the crepe. Sprinkle with a spoonful of grated Gruyere or other cheese of your choice. Roll up tightly and place in casserole dish, seam side down. Continue with remaining crepes until filling is used up. If you have extra filling, heat it and serve it over the cooked crepes or have it for lunch the next day. (It's delicious hot or cold.) Sprinkle the reserved grated cheese over the top of the crepes. Heat through in 350 F oven until filling is hot and cheese on top melts and begins to brown. Serve with a light salad of mixed greens and tomatoes, or shaved carrots.



Healdsburg: A happy hamlet for escape



Amista Winery

Photos Dan Miller

... continued from Page B1

The menu features comfortable American classics, always with a twist; Char broiled filet mignon features duck fat trumpet mushrooms, and a balsamic onion emulsion. King Salmon 'Char Siu' is coated in a light, garlic-sesame crunch. Start with Palmer's signature Lobster Corn Dogs, crispy little bites of goodness, and end with his decadent, also signature Chocolate Peanut Butter Bar. If you're lucky, classic canelé arrives as a last bite. Though the inviting dining room is currently off limits, Dry Creek Kitchen has pivoted perfectly to offer outdoor dining on its expansive garden courtyard lined with warming heat lamps.

For breakfast or lunch, don't miss Costeaux French Bakery, a Healdsburg mainstay since 1923. Known for its handmade breads, irresistible pastries, and weekend Eggs



Costeaux French Bakery

Benedict, this Healdsburg icon is routinely voted in varied polls as 'best Sonoma County bakery.' And fans of the Food Network might be interested in newly opened Quail & Condor from Chef-Owner Melissa Yanc who won \$25,000 as the network's 2019

winner of the Holiday Baking Championship. Yanc, a professionally trained pastry chef, and husband Sean McGaughey, a sous chef at acclaimed SingleThread, serve up homemade breads, croissants, pastries and pies at this artisan bakery.

Hastened by COVID, a test optional experiment is underway in college admission

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

The movement toward optional use of standardized tests dates back to 1969 when Bowdoin College in Maine ended testing requirements. Since then, hundreds of colleges have moved in the same direction. This year, as the coronavirus interrupted SAT and ACT exam schedules, a new trend emerged – many prominent schools announced test-optional experiments that will span a year or more. For example, for the upcoming application cycle, the University of Virginia will suspend its ACT/SAT mandate for a one-year pilot and then evaluate the results.

Even before the

disruptions related to the pandemic, skepticism about the value of standardized tests was mounting. Critics have observed that the ACT and SAT are too closely aligned with family income – with scores skewed higher for those who could afford expensive test prep – and exacerbated opportunity gaps for students in lower income brackets, especially those from African American and Latino families. Evidence of those disparities helped drive the influential University of California system to move forcefully away from both the SAT and ACT exams. Last year, the UC governing board voted unanimously to make the SAT and ACT optional for all applicants for two years and then to eliminate the

tests for in-state applicants after that. That represents a momentous leap toward a policy known as "test blind," in which schools do not consider scores at all. UC officials are also exploring the creation of a new test that would provide a better measure of achievement in California's core high school subjects.

On Jan. 19, the College Board added another twist to the test optional experiment by announcing it will no longer offer the one hour SAT subject tests to U.S. students. These exams used multiple-choice questions to cover discrete topics such as math, literature, history, biology, chemistry, physics, and various foreign languages. The tests long

served a niche role in admissions as a way for students to amass extra credentials and demonstrate their prowess to ultracompetitive schools. Along with ending the subject tests, College Board also ditched the optional SAT essay, which added 50 minutes to the main three-hour exam.

As testing mandates recede, we will likely see lasting change in how colleges evaluate applicants. Suspending testing mandates for one or more years raises the question of whether the test-optional pause could become a longer-term policy, leading high school grades, rigor of coursework, letters of recommendation and application essays to have greater weight. To a large extent, these

factors also vary by socio-economic status with more affluent school districts offering more rigorous coursework and many high schools in underserved communities having few or no counselors to write letters of recommendation. Disparities will persist in the admissions world and the test optional experiment is only one of many factors in the equation.

For many individuals, a college education remains an essential first step toward a fulfilling career. It is important for families to stay up to date and informed on the dramatic and ever-changing impact COVID-19 is having on higher education. Staying informed is critical to wise decision-making.



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate and graduate school study. Over the past two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. The number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write elizabeth@doingcollege.com; Visit www.doingcollege.com; Call: 925.385.0562.

American flag retired from Campo's Soda Aquatic Center



Retiring the colors

Photo provided

Submitted by Steve Bartis, Committee Chair, Troop 212

Life Scout Griffin Bartis on Jan. 31 provided a flag retirement for a worn out American flag which was flying at Soda Aquatic Center on the Campolindo High School campus. The retired flag will be brought to Camp

Timberwolf along Lower Bucks Lake in Quincy, California (home of Troop 212) this July and officially retired along with many other flags, by the Boy Scouts in the Troop. If you have a worn out flag and would like to have it officially retired, please drop it off at the Troop 212 (red) hut located at 1279 Moraga Way, across from the fire station.

DAR bestows Good Citizen Awards on four local students



Emma Safahi, Miramonte



Katie Bettencourt, Acalanes



Jeremiah Masato Yonemura, Contra Costa Christian High School



Amanda Young, Campolindo

Photos provided

Submitted by Louise Diracles

The Acalanes Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution honored four students as the winners of their high school's 2021 Good Citizen Awards. The students were chosen by their school to receive this recognition, and each participated in an essay contest responding to the question, "How do the combined actions of so many good citizens keep our nation moving forward?"

Katie Bettencourt, from Acalanes High School, said that our country is made up of people working together. Jeremiah Masato Yonemura, from Contra Costa Christian High School, said the nation needs strong leadership to serve the people. The community must care for its people. Emma Safahi, from Miramonte High School, referred to the civil rights movement,

which changed laws. She proposed that united actions of good citizens can change society. And Amanda Shin-Hwei Young, from Campolindo High School, noted that our current common enemy is the pandemic and sacrifices by everyone yields progress. She felt that visionaries created our country and said that individual actions can make positive changes. Amanda won the DAR Acalanes Chapter Top Essay and she also won the DAR District IV Top Essay.

Each student was awarded with a small scholarship, a United States flag that had been flown over the nation's Capitol in their honor, and a certificate during the Acalanes Chapter's Feb. 6 Zoom Meeting. Susan Bourne, Good Citizen Chair, led the ceremony. Acalanes Chapter's DAR Regent Mary Carrillo congratulated all the honorees and said what a joyous event it is to honor such accomplished students.

GCCP presents 'Sphinx and Sitkovetsky' Feb. 28

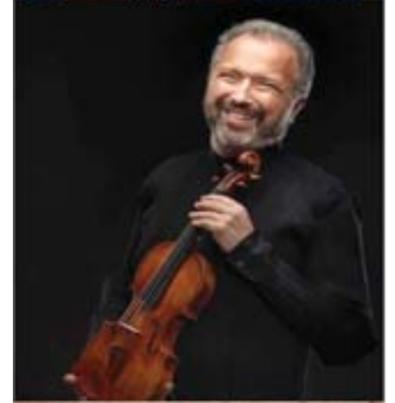
Submitted by Pamela Freund-Striplen

Gold Coast Chamber Players continue its virtual concerts at 4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 28 with "Sphinx and Sitkovetsky," the third of six Main Stage Virtual Concerts in 2021 that celebrate love and diversity.

"Sphinx and Sitkovetsky" features legendary violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky in a rare personal exploration of his career including as soloist, founder of the New European Strings Orchestra, and his work with the Sphinx Organization. The program will be a meaningful way to conclude Black History Month celebrations.

Sitkovetsky has worked closely with Sphinx Founder Aaron Dworkin to mentor emerging musicians and has personally selected two to perform for Gold Coast audiences. Sphinx artist, bassist, Xavier Foley is known for communicating his virtuosity and passion for music on the double bass, which is rarely presented as a solo instrument. He is winner of a prestigious 2018 Avery Fisher Career Grant and has won the 2016 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, a Paiko Foundation Fellowship, and First Prizes at Astral's 2014 National Auditions, Sphinx's 2014 Competition, and the 2011 International Society of Bassists Competition. Foley has performed as soloist with many orchestras including the Atlanta Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra. Also a composer, he was co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall and the Sphinx Organization for a new work entitled "For Justice and Peace" for Violin, Bass, and String Orchestra. He will be performing Bach and two original compositions, Irish Fantasy and Iranian Folk Song.

Sphinx artist, cellist Sterling Elliott has soloed with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland and Boston Symphonies and has performed in Carnegie Hall and at the 2019 World Economic Forum in Davos Switzerland. Mr. Elliott will be performing a movement from Cesar Franck's Sonata and Luigi Dallapiccolo's Ciaccona.



Photos provided

The program also includes interviews with the artists. Single tickets \$20. Concerts are live-streamed via YouTube LIVE. Purchase online at www.GCCPmusic.com or by calling (925) 283-3728. Please visit gccpmusic.com to find regular updates about concert offerings, to make donations, and to purchase tickets.

In Memory

Sandra Landin

1947-2021



Sandra Landin, resident of Moraga, California, passed away peacefully on Jan. 7 with family by her side. She was a committed, caring daughter, wife and mother. Her laughter and smiles will be missed but she left us many wonderful memories. Sandy was born in Oakland to Charles and Diana Ivy. Her family moved to Orinda when she was 2 years old and she was in the first classes to attend new schools: Inland Valley Intermediate (now Orinda Intermediate School) and Campolindo High School where she met her sweetheart Doug. They were married in 1968 and lived in Moraga since then.

Sandy enjoyed singing in Campolindo's musicals and had a life-long love of music, theater and movies. She and Doug attended many jazz festivals each year and spent summer vacations at Lake Almanor with family and friends where she water skied, swam and the sun on her face reflected her joyful personality. She met many neighbors and community members in her work as a dental assistant and at the front desk in other medical offices. She was deeply connected to the doctors and their patients and loved her community and the stability provided by living her life in it.

Sandy had a caring, gentle heart, spontaneous humor, strong faith and often told friends "I've had a wonderful life." She brought joy to her many friends who knew that she was fiercely loyal to those she loved. She showed her love through practical, uncomplicated and high energy action in service to others. Sandy was a member of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church where she served as a deacon. She loved reading and the book clubs to which she belonged, and her love of words extended to the game of Scrabble in which she was an accomplished competitor.

The family is thankful for the doctors, nurses and support staff at John Muir Medical Center and for the love and care they provided for Sandy. She is survived by Doug, her husband of 52 years, their daughter Debra, son-in-law Terry and grandson Isaac.

Donations in Sandy's memory may be made to one of her favorite charities, Meals on Wheels Diablo Region, or to the charity of your choice. Sandy's wishes were to not have a formal service, but we look forward to a future that allows friends and family to gather. We know that her joyful spirit will be present in those moments.

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.

Not to be missed

ART

"Wintermission" – a show between shows that features selected works by Gallery Artists designed to refresh and warm even the longest, darkest winter days – runs through March 4. Reflecting a wide range of styles, prices, motifs and media, the show continues the mission of presenting the best of the best of more than 100 East Bay artists. Also on hand is a wide-ranging juried selection of locally created fine crafts and jewelry. All 2-D works are available for sale or rent through an exclusive "No Regrets" rental program. Free, open to the public. Valley Art Gallery: 1661 Botelho Drive, Suite 110, Walnut Creek, www.valleyartgallery.org; (925) 935-4311 or email us at valleyartgallery@gmail.com.

Lamorinda Arts Alliance announces the exhibit "Tiny But Mighty: Honoring RBG" which will feature abstract and representational 2-D artwork that is bright, bold and powerful, just like Ruth Bader Ginsburg. This show will include mixed media, collage, monotype, oil and cold wax medium, and paintings in watercolor, oil and acrylic. LAA member Ruth Stanton curated the show. Pat Calabro, a Pacheco resident, was selected as the featured artist. Her digital acrylic collages are bright bold and full of intensity – so much intensity that she must tone down areas to make places for the eye to

rest. Calabro exhibits her work throughout the Bay Area and as far away as Ghent, Belgium. This free exhibit runs through Feb. 26.

Moraga Art Gallery Announces a new exhibit titled, "An Elegant Balance," opening Feb. 18 through April 25. "An Elegant Balance" features the work of member artists, George Ehrenhaft and K. de Groot. The title of the exhibit describes the elegant balance between George Ehrenhaft's rich and brightly painted watercolors and K. de Groot's one-of-a-kind exotic jewelry. The gallery is open Saturdays noon to 3 p.m. and by appointment. Please email the gallery at moragaartgallery@gmail.com to make an appointment. To safeguard gallery staff and visitors, we require everyone visiting the gallery to wear a face mask and to maintain social distancing. The gallery is located at 432 Center Street, Rheem Shopping Center, in Moraga. For more information, please visit the gallery's website: <https://moragaartgallery.com>

MUSIC

Sphinx and Sitkovetsky. February 28, 2021 at 4 p.m. Virtual concert link remains available until March 7. In celebration of Black History Month, Gold Coast offers a collaboration with legendary violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky and his work with the Sphinx Organization that transforms

lives through the power of diversity in the arts. Performances by bassist Xavier Foley and cellist Sterling Elliott. Tickets \$20 www.gccpmusic.com

LITERATURE

The Diablo Valley Literacy Council (DVLC) has a personalized approach to help adult English learners in our community to become proficient in the English language. If you are 18 years or older, enjoy working with people, like to learn (and share) knowledge of other cultures and have interest in supporting literacy then DVLC has a place for you! As a tutor you can help ESL (English As a Second Language) students. February 27 and March 6 is the opportunity to join our Zoom Introduction – how to start, social distance learning, materials to get you going and so much more! After participating both days, let the one-to-one tutoring sessions begin! Advance \$20 registration at www.dvlc4esl.org.

OTHER

KPFA Radio 94.1 FM presents Sister Souljah and Sabrina Jacobs: A Zoom Event: Life After Death on Tuesday, March 9, 5:30 to 7 p.m. at Online webinar, 1929 Martin Luther King Jr Way, Berkeley. Sister Souljah & Sabrina Jacobs will discuss Sister Souljah's new book, "Life After Death," and answer audience questions.

Cost: Suggested Donation \$5-\$20. For more info see www.eventbrite.com/e/sister-souljah-and-sabrina-jacobs-life-after-death-tickets-135779284495.

KPFA Radio 94.1 FM presents Poets Martin Espada & Dennis Bernstein: A Zoom Event: Floaters on Thursday, March 11, 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Online webinar, 1929 Martin Luther King Jr Way, Berkeley. Martin Espada and Dennis Bernstein will discuss Espada's new poetry book, "Floaters," and answer questions. Cost: Suggested Donation \$1-\$20. For more info see www.eventbrite.com/e/martin-espada-and-dennis-bernstein-floaters-tickets-130079233489 or email ken@kpfa.org.

Hereditary cancer – it's a family event: virtual seminar. Wednesday March 10, 7 p.m. Please join us for this important conversation about hereditary cancer and its impact on the men and women in your family. You will hear from medical and subject matter experts offering the latest updates in genetic testing, cancer prevention, and how it impacts you and yours. This will be a free, live event open to all, with the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists. Register at <https://link.sharsheret.org/contracosta>

GARDEN

The Montelindo Garden Club meets on the third Friday of every month, September through May. Our March meeting begins Friday March 19 at 10 a.m. on Zoom. Everyone is welcome. Presentation: "Creating a CA Native Garden with Homes for Birds, Bees, Butterflies and More." Speaker: Sallie Bryan, who designs and installs native habitat gardens to attract local bees, birds, bugs, and butterflies. "Even a small garden can become an oasis for the wildlife and homeowner. Finding just the right plants for the space considering soil types, sun, and water needs along with understanding the habits of the desired species is what it is all about." Sally is an enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and engaging speaker. To request a Zoom link to attend this meeting, email: montelindogarden@aol.com.

Please submit events: calendar@lamorinda-weekly.com

Lamorinda's Religious Services



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ONLINE WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Facebook Premiere Community Worship every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Go to facebook.com/HSLCOrinda/



Sunday Worship Services are accessible at our website at about 10:15 a.m. each Sunday (after they have premiered on Facebook). Visit our website to access the current and recent sermons.

St. Anselm's Episcopal Church
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Virtual service at Sun. 9:00 AM

If someone would like to be added to our Zoom invitation please call 925-284-7420 or email cathy.w@stanselms.ws 682 Michael Lane, Lafayette, www.stanselms.ws

Lamorinda Weekly

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Contact us:

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Publishers/Owners: Andy and Wendy Scheck; andy@lamorindaweekly.com, wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Editor: Jennifer Wake; jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com
Sports Editor: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Advertising: 925-377-0977, Wendy Scheck; wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Staff Writers: Vera Kochan; vera@lamorindaweekly.com, Pippa Fisher; pippa@lamorindaweekly.com, Nick Marnell; nick@lamorindaweekly.com, Sora O'Doherty; Sora@lamorindaweekly.com, Jon Kingdon; sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Digging Deep: Cynthia Brian; Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com
Food: Susie Iventosch; suziventosch@gmail.com
Contributing Writers: Conrad Bassett, Sophie Braccini, Diane Claytor, Michele Duffy, Fran Miller, Jenn Freedman, Mona Miller, Kara Navolio, Moya Stone, Margie Ryerson, Linda Fodrini-Johnson
Calendar Editor: Jaya Griggs; calendar@lamorindaweekly.com
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Mailing address: Lamorinda Weekly, 1480 Moraga Road STE C #202, Moraga, CA 94556 Phone: 925-377-0977; Fax: 925-263-9223; email: info@lamorindaweekly.com
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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Cross country runners step up for new season



Dylan Gunn

Photo provided

By Jon Kingdon

The ice has finally been broken for California high school sports. With the state in the purple tier, the Lamorinda high schools on Feb. 1 began their track and field, cross country, swimming, golf, and boy's tennis programs. Girl's tennis will begin on March 22. Though the track and field teams are practicing, their seasons do not officially begin until March 15. The cross country team's season will conclude on March 13 so the runners will simply move on to the track team, which begins their competitive season on March 15.

COVID-19 remains a major concern, with the

idea of official competitions for the cross country and track teams still in the process of being formulated. "It's an interesting situation as we are in unprecedented times," said Tristin Tool, who is the head coach for Miramonte's cross country and track teams. "It's cross country season right now but it's unrecognizable. There are not going to be competitions with other schools, but we will have some time trials amongst ourselves. Still, it's been really nice to be back coaching since we haven't had an official practice in 11 months. It's a little chaotic which is understandable due to a lot of new rules."

Despite all the difficulties, the coaches and athletes are glad to be working out as a team. "There is certainly a sense of relief and a little bit of apprehension because we constantly have to deal with the spectrum of emotions that everyone has been dealing with," said Acalanes' cross country head coach Jeff Hutson. "The kids have responded energetically. They have been really anxious to get out and be around their peers and get some exercise. It's been a fantastic experience for us just to see how excited the kids have been to get out to run and train."

Dylan Gunn, a senior at Campolindo, who led the team to the state championship last year, has taken on more responsibilities: "I took on as much of a leadership role as I was able to because our workouts were limited to small groups. I did not run with a lot of the younger kids because we were not allowed to have groups larger than 14. However, I was able to talk with them in our Sunday Zoom sessions, which were arranged by Coach (Chuck) Woolridge. We did a lot of team building and talked about what it means to be a part of a team which was a way for us to have a more cohesive group."

Normally the cross country team competes in the fall and the track team competes in the spring. Starting off in the winter season, with the colder, wetter and windier weather than the teams are used to, has not proven to be a factor. "Actually, this time of year would be our first week of practice anyways," said Acalanes head track coach Joe Escobar. "We would have about a month before our first competition so it's not that big of an adjustment."

"I welcome that kind of challenge and the kids do as well," Hutson said. "That's been one of the most pleasant surprises to me. We're doing practices at 7 a.m. two days a week when it's been 32 degrees and every kid has been showing up and they're charged and raring to go. It's so cool."

Besides the cooler weather, sundown comes earlier than the teams are used to, said Gunn: "At the beginning of the year, we always have the right clothing for the weather. What's different is that we must be efficient with our time because there is only so much light, but beyond that, there is not a whole lot that we are doing differently other than just trying to be smart and doing the basic stuff."

With the teams not being able to compete head-to-head, it's forced the teams to find ways to adjust. Acalanes is planning to do a virtual head-to-head

meet with Las Lomas and Northgate. To avoid any type of contact, one team will run at 8 a.m., one at 10 a.m. and one at noon. The teams will then post their times to athletic.net to see who ultimately wins the meet.

As a rule, showing for practice with one's cell phone in hand would be grounds for discipline. It's become de-rigueur for every athlete due to the protocol requirements set in place. "When I wake up in the morning, I receive a text that asks me three questions," Gunn said. "They ask, 'Do you have any of the symptoms that we have listed? Does anybody you know have any of these symptoms? Have you been exposed to anybody with COVID-19 within the last 14 days?' If you answer no to all the questions, you are then cleared for that day."

The athletes will receive a green sign on their respective cell phones which they will have to show to their coach before being allowed to practice with the team.

It doesn't end at that point for Escobar. "We're doing all we can to keep the kids spaced as they step on to the track. We're screening the kids with the company Nurse Health Screening which the school provided us with. We encourage our kids to get tested. We're doing every measure we possibly can, to keep kids safe but still getting them out there."

Not being able to defend their state championship is particularly disappointing for the boys' and girls' Campolindo team. "It's totally frustrating," said Gunn. "I thought that we were going to return with an even better team and possibly make the national championship. I'm just happy to be able to train with my teammates and build new memories that will last forever, being able to spend that time with my friends."

It's equally exasperating for the Acalanes cross country team as well, said Hutson: "It's not even measurable. Our boys were poised to win NCS this year and our girls were poised to podium. It's been one of the most challenging things for us to know what we have and not being able to compete. It's a disservice to the kids." Hutson singled out Nicolle Frigon, Lauren Yee, and Lena Johnson as standouts on the girls' team and Ed Balsadua, Tyler Hunt, Bennett Dodge, Loid Windfuhr-Durand, and Ethan Childes for the boys' team.

Tool's top runner is Audrey Allen who will be running for UCLA next year. "She is one of the better cross country runners in the state and is looking to do the same in track. For a lot of our juniors, this should be their time to shine but, unfortunately, we won't have times. We will have results from the time trials, but I don't know how much weight college coaches will put on them because they are not official. We're young and building on the boy's side. Ricky Davis is looking very promising. He is a junior and just started last year and is coming into his stride."

... continued on Page C2

0/0/100 15/15/0/100 40/40/0/100

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Cross country runners step up for new season

... continued from Page C1

The Campolindo boys' team is returning four of their top seven runners from last year. Besides Gunn, senior Owen Lekki, junior Rhys Pullen, and sophomore Alex Lodewick would have been the foundation for the team this year. The Campolindo girls graduated four of their top seven runners at the state tournament last year. Still, with a

number of talented runners returning, the Cougars would have again competed for the state title.

Tool has a fairly young team that has been good for a couple of years and has found a way to take advantage of the college quarantines to help his team. "I have recruited some alumni to help me coach because I have had to split between the cross country and track team. I have some great alumni

like Cassie Haskell who runs for Cal is now coaching the frosh-soph and JV girls. I have some alumni who are 'attending' schools on the East Coast but are doing virtual-learning locally so I have some great runners that are helping me and that's been amazing."

In the end, it's the commitment, focus and drive for all of the cross country athletes that most stands out to Hutson: "The one thing that has kept

us showing up day in and day out since July is the will and spirit of these athletes. It is so overwhelming and cool. It's been particularly unfair for the seniors that have worked for four years to get to this place. Despite all the issues that everyone has been dealing with, and not to be able to compete and get the recognition they deserve, they still show up ready to work."

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 14 Issue 26 Wednesday, February 17, 2021



Lamorinda Home Sales

... read on Page D2

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Let the sun shine in!



A variety of daffodils bloom along with Chinese fringe.



Fragrant flowering pear attracts bees.

Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

*"When the moon is in the Seventh House
And Jupiter aligns with Mars
Then peace will guide the planets
And love will steer the stars.*

This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius."

~ Lyrics to Age of Aquarius by The 5th Dimension

Astrologers don't agree that it is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, but one thing is certain, until Feb. 18, we are living under the sign of Aquarius. It has not felt like winter as the sun has been shining daily with only sporadic bouts of drizzle. In the past two weeks, gardens have burst into bloom as the days are warmer and brighter.

Here in my yard, spring has sprung a full month ahead of schedule. The peach tree buds display their glorious magenta hues, the daffodils stretch their necks to the heavens, and camellias didn't take a bloom break. Throughout our neighborhoods, evergreen pear trees are in full flower. Birds are feathering their nests, the frogs have begun their mating croaks, and worms are busy loosening the soil.

Our reservoirs are not yet at capacity and we desperately need more rain. Since the groundhog went back into her hole, I'm hopeful that we will still get much-needed precipitation.



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Lamorinda home sales recorded

City	Last reported	Lowest amount	Highest amount
LAFAYETTE	13	\$1,008,000	\$4,395,000
MORAGA	11	\$387,500	\$2,250,000
ORINDA	8	\$280,000	\$3,000,000

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

- 875 Birdhaven Court, \$1,347,000, 4 Bdrms, 1749 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-28-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,300,000, 04-22-19
- 1149 Brown Avenue, \$1,685,000, 3 Bdrms, 1870 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-30-20
- 3396 East Terrace, \$2,120,000, 3 Bdrms, 2230 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-31-20,
Previous Sale: \$950,000, 05-20-13
- 3696 Happy Valley Road, \$2,400,000, 5 Bdrms, 4764 SqFt, 2000 YrBlt, 12-31-20,
Previous Sale: \$2,210,000, 11-30-05
- 393 Hermosa Court, \$2,395,000, 4 Bdrms, 2853 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 01-06-21,
Previous Sale: \$701,000, 09-22-00
- 3699 Highland Road, \$1,225,000, 4 Bdrms, 1727 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 01-06-21,
Previous Sale: \$450,500, 07-26-11
- 3350 Hillside Terrace, \$1,975,000, 5 Bdrms, 4019 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 01-06-21
- 3963 Los Arabis Drive, \$2,155,000, 3 Bdrms, 2185 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-30-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,900,000, 04-29-16
- 3235 Mt Diablo Court #205, \$1,950,000, 2 Bdrms, 2211 SqFt, 2019 YrBlt, 12-29-20
- 3560 Old Mountain View Drive, \$1,008,000, 3 Bdrms, 1662 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 12-30-20,
Previous Sale: \$472,000, 04-15-02
- 141 Peaceful Lane, \$1,650,000, 5 Bdrms, 3918 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 01-04-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,165,000, 12-17-10
- 513 Silverado Drive, \$1,875,000, 5 Bdrms, 2724 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 12-28-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,400,000, 02-26-14
- 3428 Woodview Drive, \$4,395,000, 5 Bdrms, 5824 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 01-08-21,
Previous Sale: \$805,000, 04-01-91

MORAGA

- 35 Arroyo Drive, \$1,535,000, 4 Bdrms, 2419 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 01-06-21
- 142 Ascot Court #3, \$490,000, 2 Bdrms, 945 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 01-06-21,
Previous Sale: \$410,000, 04-23-07
- 1501 Camino Peral, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 1440 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 12-29-20
- 33 Laird Drive, \$1,215,000, 4 Bdrms, 1576 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 12-29-20
- 140 Miramonte Drive, \$387,500, 2 Bdrms, 1742 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 12-28-20,
Previous Sale: \$57,500, 03-16-15
- 148 Miramonte Drive, \$799,000, 2 Bdrms, 1514 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 12-29-20,
Previous Sale: \$187,000, 04-01-89
- 1325 Rimer Drive, \$1,041,000, 3 Bdrms, 1667 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 12-28-20
- 224 Sandringham Drive, \$2,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 2577 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 01-05-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,500,000, 07-19-13
- 8 Via Barcelona, \$940,000, 3 Bdrms, 2417 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 12-28-20,
Previous Sale: \$629,000, 04-13-12
- 811 Villa Lane #2, \$508,500, 2 Bdrms, 952 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 01-08-21,
Previous Sale: \$150,000, 06-23-99
- 11 Williams Drive, \$1,825,000, 4 Bdrms, 2552 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 01-07-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,460,000, 06-09-16

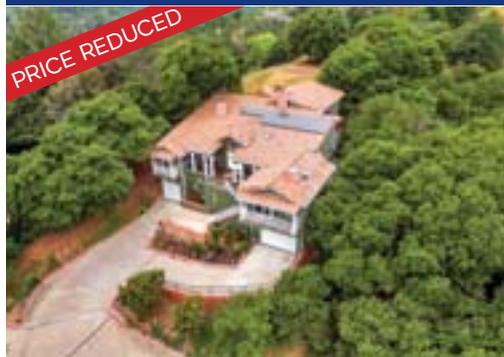
ORINDA

- 10 Bates Boulevard, \$1,415,000, 4 Bdrms, 2030 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 12-28-20,
Previous Sale: \$1,415,000, 10-28-20
- 15 Briones Vwx, \$280,000, 4 Bdrms, 3146 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 12-31-20
- 138 Fiesta Circle, \$975,000, 3 Bdrms, 1450 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 12-30-20,
Previous Sale: \$422,500, 03-01-98
- 11 Ivy Drive, \$825,000, 3 Bdrms, 1572 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 01-06-21
- 9 Loma Vista Drive, \$1,050,000, 4 Bdrms, 2327 SqFt, 1940 YrBlt, 12-29-20,
Previous Sale: \$920,000, 09-30-20
- 11 Rae Drive, \$1,685,000, 4 Bdrms, 1812 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 01-04-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,065,000, 07-13-07
- 48 Rheem Boulevard, \$3,000,000, 5 Bdrms, 3688 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 01-05-21,
Previous Sale: \$2,425,000, 06-03-16
- 6 Valencia Road, \$1,975,000, 5 Bdrms, 2796 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 01-04-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,625,000, 10-02-14

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Care, feeding and fixing your garbage disposal



Photo provided

The bottom of garbage disposals have a circuit breaker button than can be pushed when the breaker trips.

By Jim Hurley

Remember Fred Flintstone's disposal? (Or am I just really old?) The little dinosaur would sleep under the sink, and they would poke it with a stick to wake it up to eat their scraps. We have evolved, but in principle your disposal is the same, right down to the growling, slurping noises it makes.

Of all the appliances in your kitchen, the garbage disposal works the least. This lazy machine sits idly by for hours on end while your refrigerator keeps things cold, the dishwasher keeps things clean, and your oven and stove make things hot for prolonged periods of time. The disposal waits under the sink for someone to turn it on and feed it.

Now consider that last sentence: the phrase, "turn it on and feed it," in that order, is all you ever need to know about keeping your disposal

running smoothly for its lifetime. The process is to start running water, turn on the disposal, and then push your scraps down past the rubber stopper. Starting running water before you start your disposal washes the debris down as the grinder works, instead of having to push a mass of pre-ground waste through the drain line.

Your disposal could run for a very long time if you simply turn it on before you put stuff in it. The empty disposal motor can get up to speed and then take on whatever you throw at it except, of course, for silverware, bottle caps, and fibrous food waste like corn husks and banana peels.

It might be a little intimidating to think of turning on the disposal before feeding it. There are those scenes in horror films where the disposal reaches up and grabs someone's hand and pulls them down the drain. Trust me, the disposal blades are four inches below the rubber stoppers at the opening and they stay there on the bottom. It is perfectly safe to put things in the top while it is running, just keep your fingers on the topside of that little rubber strainer.

But what can you do when you flip the switch for the garbage disposal and – nothing? Do not despair; the following steps can have you back in the grind quickly. First, turn the switch back off, make sure it is off because the next step is to put your hand down the drain and pull out the material you were trying to

grind away. You can always unplug the disposal under the sink if you're not sure the switch is off. Confirm that you did not drop a measuring spoon or bottle cap down there along with the food scraps. If the sink is holding water, the drain is plugged so keep removing the junk in the disposal until the water can run out.

Next, test to see if the disposal has power. This requires a quiet room. Turn on the switch and listen for signs of life from the motor, any clicking noise or hum is good. Quickly shut off the switch once you have listened. Did it hum? Good, you have power, but something is still stuck in the grinder. We'll get to that.

If it didn't hum, get a flashlight and look under the sink. Built into the bottom of the disposal, there is a little circuit breaker. The breaker has a button that pops out when it trips. Push it with your finger; it should go up and stay up in the housing. If it does, turn on the switch above and see if the disposal works. If the disposal doesn't try to work or even make a hum, check the circuit breaker switch in the electrical panel. If the circuit breaker is on, and you don't get any signs of life from the disposal, it's time for a new one.

When you have power and it still won't grind, make sure the

switch is off and reach in to feel around for any objects that should not be in there. If you can't find anything, or if it is wedged too tight to remove, the next step is to find a 1/4-inch hex wrench (typically one comes with the disposal).

Once you have that, look for the socket in the center of the bottom of the disposal, insert the hex wrench and twist one direction. If it doesn't move, try the other direction. If it is not moving either way, try jiggling back and forth a little. What you're doing is trying to turn the motor of the grinder to unstick whatever is lodged in there. If you can get the wrench to turn in a complete circle, you've got it! (Be sure to remove the wrench from the socket before turning the disposal on again.)

Make sure the disposal is off and reach back in to see if you can remove whatever you have dislodged. Then turn on the water and turn on the disposal. You should be back in business.

Jim Hurley is an independent handyman with over 25 years of experience in residential repairs. Hopefully this free advice is helpful to someone attempting Do-It-Yourself home repairs. The information presented is intended for informational purposes and for use by persons having appropriate technical skill, at their own discretion and risk.



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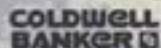
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Cynthia Brian's Garden Chores for February

Roses

Pruning: Roses need to be pruned to allow for them to thrive. You'll need pruning shears, loppers, a pruning saw, and gloves. Cut out dead or woody stems as well as any diseased or damaged stems. If you have rambling roses, allow them to ramble unless you need them contained. With climbers, cut the previous year's flowering shoots. For hybrid teas and floribundas, prune the stems by 2/3. With shrub roses, cutting back to a 1/3 for single flowering and 1/3 to 2/3 for repeat flowering. Pruning will ensure a beautiful, long-lasting blooming season. Keep in mind if you want smaller plants, you may prune harder. Make sure to nicely shape your bushes. If you have the room, select canes to plant elsewhere or give to a friend. You can plant the canes directly in the ground or in pots to root. Dip canes in a rooting powder before planting.

Bare-Root Planting: Through early spring you can plant bare-root roses.

- Make sure the soil isn't frozen or water-logged.
- Choose an area that receives a minimum of four hours of sunlight daily. The more sun, the better your bush will grow.
- Rehydrate your bare-root in a bucket of water overnight.
- Remove weeds and rocks from the area where you will dig the hole and loosen the soil with a garden fork.
- Dig a hole with a spade approximately 16" x 20" or whatever is necessary for the roots to spread.
- Add a few handfuls of compost or rose soil to the hole.
- Remove the rose from the bucket and place in the hole. The bottom of the stems need to be 2-3" below the top of the hole.
- Replace the original soil, the tap down with your foot.
- Water.

Other Goddess Gardener Tips

- FERTILIZE your trees, shrubs, and ground covers.
- SCATTER snail bait around your garden.
- APPLY a systemic insecticide to roses to prevent the first flush of aphids in the spring.
- SPRAY roses, citrus trees, fruit trees, evergreen pear trees, and crape myrtles with a dormant oil.
- PICK UP and discard fallen camellia blooms.
- CUT a branch from a budding peach tree to watch the flowers unfurl.
- PLANT a few of my favorite specimens:
- To attract hummingbirds: Fringe-love lies bleeding (*Amaranthus caudatus*) boasts striking red hanging plumage. Columbine (*Aquilegia*) is a perennial with clouds of bell-shaped flowers in several colors. A loquat tree offers flowers that hummingbirds crave.
- Drought-resistant, no maintenance ground cover: Pink Knotweed
- Shade plant with distinctive colors: Hellebores
- For Borders: Bergenia
- Shrub that cascades: Purple potato plant

As we leave the sign of Aquarius and enter the horoscope of Pisces, let's pray that the lyrics from the Age of Aquarius ring true throughout 2021.

"Harmony and understanding
Sympathy and trust abounding
No more falsehoods or derisions
Golden living dreams of visions
Mystic crystal revelation
And the minds true liberation"

Let the sun shine, let the sun shine in! And, please let it rain this next month.

Happy Gardening! Happy Growing!



Pink knotweed (*Persicaria capitata*) is a perennial ground cover with non-stop pink pom pom blooms



Hellebores common name is Lenten Rose as they begin blooming around the first days of Lent.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Bergenia is tolerant of wet soil and can be grown around ponds and fountains.



Cynthia Brian in the Age of Aquarius.

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.

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