

# Letters to the editor

## Thanks for the lights

This is a thank you to some wonderfully generous person or persons on Brown Avenue in Lafayette.

At Christmastime a generous display of lights appeared across our valley from tress lit by white lights somewhere near Brown Avenue. From Hawthorn Drive, they appear as beautiful bunches of grapes hanging in the night sky.

I don't think this person or persons know how much joy and love they have provided so many of their town neighbors. This must have been a huge task and I (we) want to say how much we appreciate their efforts and kindness.

Mary Ann Hoisington  
Lafayette

## Correction of Lafayette City Manager comments to Editor

In a letter to the Editor, the Lafayette City Manager recently wrote a correction to a Save Lafayette Ad. Unfortunately, the correction was misleading. Under its State-approved Housing Element, which is effective through the end of 2022, the City identified various parcels in the downtown that could accommodate enough units to meet or exceed the State's quota. The City is not required to build the units, but only to show there is enough land zoned at appropriate densities to accommodate the need, and that its codes and requirements

do not unduly constrain the building of those units. The proposed Terraces apartments were not included in the current Housing Element's list of sites. In fact, the Terraces (even if still approved after the current legal process) cannot be built and occupied before the end of the life of the current Housing Element - it will take nearly a year just to do the massive amount of grading required. Therefore, the Terraces cannot be counted towards the current quota of affordable units. We also dispute that the ad contained "many inaccuracies". We suspect that the "inaccuracies" the City Manager is referring to are differences of opinion and facts that form the basis of the current lawsuit and will be resolved by the courts. And we stand by our statement that the City needs to protect its businesses, jobs and commercial space downtown, and not sit by and see them all go away and be replaced by just housing, which is what is happening currently. Save Lafayette strives for accuracy in the information it provides to the public and is open to any clarification. Unfortunately, The City Manager's correction was inaccurate.

Michael Griffiths  
President, Save Lafayette

## Not So Fast

It appears we will be moving back to the Red Tier in the next few weeks. A third vaccine is now approved for emergency

use. So what changes after you have had your two doses? The answer is "not that much." And here is why this is so important. A year into this and we have all had it. Enough already! But it is a little more complicated and imperative that we don't make the same mistake every time we seem to get some control on the pandemic. For the sake of our families, friends and the businesses that have struggled since they were first shut down. Dr. Virk specializes in Infectious Diseases gives us three good reasons to continue Social Distancing, wearing masks and washing hands.

"Number one, while the vaccine reduces your risk, it does not eliminate the risk of being exposed to having the disease and asymptotically transmitting the virus to others."  
"Remember that even the best of these vaccines is about 90%-95% effective, meaning, you might still have a 1 in10 or 1 in 20 chance of being exposed and getting the disease. So the mask is protecting you."

The third reason is related to these new mutant variants and other variants still to come. "The vaccine might protect you against death, but maybe your protection against disease ends up being about 50-60%," says Dr. Poland. "If that's true, then we still want to wear masks to prevent disease, and prevent the spread of those variants, which could then mutate further causing even more infections."

We all want our "normal" back. And the only way we are going to get there is understanding that even with vaccines and a path to "herd immunity", we have a lot more work to do. Let's do it together...

Jay Lifson  
Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

## Moraga Municipal Code regulating celltowers

On March 10, the Moraga Town Council will be voting on an important matter: the acceptance of a Master Licensing Agreement with Verizon Wireless. This will open the floodgates to development of dozens of Fifth Generation (5G) cell towers. We estimate that there will be as many as 70 of these towers throughout Moraga for each telecom carrier that wants to provide 5G service here. These towers pose all kinds of risks:

health, fire, property devaluation. The town of Moraga is woefully unprepared for this onslaught. Our Municipal Code provides for no transparency, no restrictions, no testing, etc. This will have a real impact on the lives of Moragans. I think this is an important civic matter that your publication should do a feature story on. I am not a person who is anti-big business or distrustful of the government. To the contrary, I had a 27-year career in Federal law enforcement and retired as a Special Agent-in-Charge. But I have researched this issue and I feel there is definitely cause for concern, and that it is prudent for our local government to proceed cautiously when implementing this new 5G technology.

Mike Seitler  
Moraga

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# High schools moving toward hybrid opening in mid-March

By Sophie Braccini

If the downward trend in the number of new cases of COVID-19 persists, high school students should experience in the coming weeks the same happy return to in-person education that local elementary and middle school students have experienced. The administrators of the Acalanes Union High School District that manage the high schools in Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, along with Las Lomas in Walnut Creek, are ready to ring that school bell and hope for a reopening on March 16.

The California Department of Public Health requires counties to keep the secondary schools closed until their geographic area is in the Red Tier. Although data collected in Contra Costa County show satisfactory numbers for testing positivity and equity investment, the number of daily new cases per 100,000 was 12.6 on Feb. 23. This number, still consistent with a downward

trend, is enough to allow for lower grade schools to reopen, but fails to reach the required 7.0 that will toggle the district into the Red Tier and high schools into reopening. The CDPH used to require that counties maintain these data for five consecutive days before reopening the high school, but new guidance now allows for immediate reopening.

At the Feb. 17 AUHSD board meeting, students who represent the different high schools channeled their peers' desire to return to on-site learning, while staff representatives asked that teachers and other high school personnel get priority vaccination.

AUHSD Superintendent John Nickerson and his team are tracking the county and local public health data and projecting accordingly. With their current projections, the AUHSD would shift to hybrid and remote schedules on March 16. Sixty-five percent of families have opted for sending their children physically back to school, while 35% pre-

fer to stay in remote instruction until the end of the year.

The week leading up to the reopening, the district will offer one professional development day for staff, and four days of student training and in-person orientations.

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# Collaboration could expedite downtown playground

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Poole noted that downtown parks have long been a priority for the city, and that with increased housing, that need would only increase, even for small parks. Describing it as a win-win, he said it could play a key part in a vibrant downtown located near the Park Theater, opposite the soon to be developed plaza at Golden Gate Way, and near the creeks trail as it is developed in the future, and would attract people to the library while taking advantage of the underutilized amphitheater area.

One site, known as "Library Park" that had been identified in the city's downtown specific plan as a possible park location disappeared from consideration with the approval of the Madison Park Apartments development in its place.

Public comment was positive with parents welcoming a play area downtown. LLLC

Foundation Executive Director Beth Needel said that the foundation was looking forward to hearing more about the idea at an upcoming meeting. Needel said that while it is still premature she is intrigued and certainly understands the necessity for a downtown public park.

Katayanagi explained after the meeting that as part of the EIR work required for Leigh Creekside Park, reasonable alternatives for the project or its location had to be found. Although in 2017 when the EIR work began he said no one was ready to collaborate, as tempers cooled parties were more willing to explore ideas together.

The PT&R will work with the LLC, the Friends of the Library and the Lafayette Historical Society to engage and look for their support and partnership ahead of reaching out to members of the public. If it is well received it could be back to the city council in the spring.



## Lafayette Volunteer Opportunities

There are currently openings on the following City Lafayette Commissions/Committees

- Capital Projects Assessment (CPAC)
- Community Center Foundation
- Citizen Advisory Committee to CCTA
- Creeks Committee
- Crime Prevention Commission
- DSIMPIC
- Environmental Task Force
- Parks, Trails & Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Public Art Committee
- Transportation and Circulation Commission
- Youth Commission

For additional information on these volunteer positions visit the city's website: [www.lovelafayette.org](http://www.lovelafayette.org) **Hot Topics**  
Or e-mail City Clerk Joanne Robbins, [jrobbins@lovelafayette.org](mailto:jrobbins@lovelafayette.org)

**Application deadline April 1, 2021.**

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