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Letters to the editor

Orinda Not Responsible for Creek Oversight

The letter from Bob Stoops (published Mar. 31) mischaracterizes the role of Orinda as alleged "floodplain manager." Contrary to his letter, the city is NOT responsible "for ensuring adequate flood protection for our downtown." I have confirmed with Orinda's Public Works Director that Orinda currently has no legal responsibility to do any study or do anything else regarding the creek. Moreover, were a hydrological study to establish that there is a greater risk of flooding downtown than is currently believed by FEMA, the losers will be the downtown businesses, who will see a dramatic rise in their flood insurance premiums. Why would Mr. Stoops misstate Orinda's responsibility? The reason is that he is one of the leaders of Friends of Orinda Creeks, and FOC wants the city to spend over \$100,000 of taxpayer dollars for a hydrological study of FOC's plan to realign and restore the creek. The FOC plan would realign the creek so that it meanders, which would increase the risk of flooding, which might require the city to spend enormous sums to mitigate that risk, and which would increase the risk and costs to business owners downtown. Notably, although Mr. Stoops is advocating that taxpayer money be spent on the FOC plan, he is not listed on the FOC website as having contributed any of his own money to FOC in the last 12 months. A restoration of the creek at taxpayer expense has limited public support. The sales tax scientific survey a year ago established that fewer than half of Orinda residents want to spend money for this. The FOC website states that only approximately two dozen people have made contributions to FOC in the last 12 months. Yet FOC, a vocal minority, continues to press its agenda, insisting that the city use taxpayers' money to advance its agenda.

There are better uses for our limited financial resources, such as fire prevention, storm drains, and roads, as the sales tax survey demonstrated.

Nick Waranoff

Orinda

A step to recovery

I attend Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JM). The worldwide pandemic, Covid-19, has not failed to hit our Lamorinda schools. We have adapted to learning vital knowledge that will serve students a lifetime in minuscule boxes on a screen instead of in well functioning classrooms.

Being a seventh-grader in the center of all this uncertainty and rapid social and academic changes, the ability to return to class using a hybrid system is heartily welcomed. A friend and fellow classmate of mine informed me that, "School is my favorite place ... I know going back during the pandemic won't be the same but any fraction of the experience I am excited for."

Even though this pandemic has challenged students and pushed them to their limits there is still a silver lining to be found. Especially in our community of Lamorinda where education and extracurricular activities are such a given, it has provided students with a new gratitude and appreciation for the amazing opportunities we have found and been presented with. A fellow JM student told me that, "Covid has made me more grateful for school but it has also reminded me how fun school really is."

Currently, my junior high, JM, is continuing to look for even more ways to improve the student's return to school. For example, figuring out safe ways to allow all students to attend school for more than three hours a day and every week instead of every other. Perhaps, many years from now we will make jokes about masks and kooties and coughing, but for now the pandemic is causing a surreal reality that has pushed students, teachers, and parents, and the opening of schools is a huge weight lifted, and a big step in the direction of recovery.

Anya Houston

Moraga

Housing Element challenges ahead

Every eight years, a state initiative known as the Regional Housing Needs Allocation requires California's cities to plan for more housing. From 2013 to 2021, the state instructed Lafayette to plan for the development of 400 new units. From 2021 to 2029, we must plan for over 2,000.

These numbers present an opportunity to learn about how we can reap the benefits of growth and minimize its negative impacts. Inclusive Lafayette believes new development in our town should be planned with three goals in mind: limiting adverse impacts on our infrastructure, services, and safety; promoting more equitable and inclusive housing; and minimizing costly violations of state law.

By allowing denser multi-family housing in our downtown corridor, Lafayette can minimize the burdens of new development on our infrastructure. Encouraging walkable communities near BART and Highway 24 will reduce the traffic impacts of new cars and boost our local businesses with a larger consumer base. Data from the Census and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development suggests multi-family housing typically brings a third of the school-age children that single-family homes do, so higher-density development downtown will bring a moderate number of students to our schools. State laws and local ordinances also incentivize developers to include affordable units in denser developments.

The city should also study and consider upzoning for duplexes, triplexes, and quads in certain areas outside of downtown, especially near schools and the community center. Upzoning in these areas, to the extent

deemed safe by fire safety experts, could promote a more equitable distribution of development across Lafayette.

New housing throughout the community can help make Lafayette more accessible to future residents who are unable to afford our exclusive cost of living, such as our teachers, service workers, and others who cannot afford multi-million dollar homes.

Our Housing Element will be the best it can be if we bring diverse viewpoints to the table. Lafayette community members, please participate in GPAC meetings to make sure that your voices are heard. Visit inclusivelafayette.org to learn more about our vision for building a more equitable community. Inclusive Lafayette board

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