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Top left: Moraga Commons Park bustles with activity; lower left: Moraga police officers talk with skateboarders. Upper right: Patrons enjoy coffee and food on Lafayette Circle; lower right: Orinda Farmers' Market bustles with activity.

Photos V. Kochan, S. O'Doherty and J. Wake

Lamorinda makes slow return to a sense of normal

By Vera Kochan, Sora O'Doherty, and Jennifer Wake

With June 15 anticipated to be the marker for a return to a sense of normal for most Californians, signs that the world is reverting back to familiar times are being seen throughout the three Lamorinda communities.

Tutu's, The Cooperage, and American Kitchen were replete with diners – both inside and out – and Papillon in La Fiesta Square and the Coffee Shop tables on Lafayette Circle were brimming with patrons June 4, with sounds of laughter and chatter filling the air as residents enjoyed each other's company and even shared occasional hugs as they greeted one another on the street.

Moraga Commons Park was bustling with visitors enjoying a warm, sunny morning June 3 with a little bit more "freedom" than people have been used to for over a year. From toddlers to older citizens, the park welcomed the types of activity that it was built to handle.

Kids amused themselves in the sandbox and on the playground equipment, and could be heard squealing with delight while their parents sat nearby catching up with each other's news. Every picnic table in sight was occupied with lunch-goers or craft activities. Boys played a casual game of baseball on the shaded lawn. Mothers had their babies in strollers out for walks on the paved paths. Elderly folks strolled along through the park at a leisurely pace, while joggers weaved their way through young and old alike, adding to the joyful

sights and sounds of returning normalcy.

The June 5 Orinda Farmers' Market was quieter than usual, with shoppers choosing to continue wearing masks, but lunchtime was busy at the food stalls and live music was back. Many in-person openings and summer events were announced the week of June 1, including the reopening of Orinda Library Gallery (see story Page A7), the East Bay Open Studios in-person event (see story Page B2), the return of the Taste of Lafayette (see story Page A3), and plans for Hacienda Nights to start up again at the Hacienda de Las Flores in Moraga July 15.

As Lamorinda awaits final details surrounding the June 15 lifting of restrictions, mask-wearers throughout the three towns are a visual reminder to all that we're not out of the woods just yet.

But, oh, we're getting there!

Advertising



Letters to the Editor	A11
Healthy Lifestyle	B3
Not to be missed	B4
How to contact us	B4
Community Service	B5
Obituary	B5
Classified	C1
Shop Orinda	C3

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Split city council OK's Orinda parade on the Fourth of July

By Sora O'Doherty

In the face of Fourth of July celebrations being canceled by nearly every nearby municipality in the East Bay, the Orinda City Council voted to allow the annual parade to go on this year. Mayor Amy Worth and Council Member Inga Miller voted against the resolution, which allowed it to pass by a majority of one.

The event will be a scaled down version, allowing for the parade and some music in the Community Park, but no food will be purveyed and the event will be subject to the new guidelines expected to be issued by the CDC and Contra Costa County on June 15. While it is expected that

there will not be a mask mandate, masks will be encouraged, and the Orinda Association hopes to sell bannanas with parade-associated designs. Masks will also be available at the event, for those who don't bring their own, and decorated masks will be distributed to all children.

There was discussion about what the usual attendance has been in the past, and what attendance might be expected this year. Concerns were expressed that if the Orinda parade is the only public event in the East Bay area, it might attract larger crowds of visitors from outside the city.

The resolution was passed at the city council meeting on June 1, which was the last date that would allow for

the parade to go forward. The council did not have the luxury to wait longer in order to see exactly what the new requirements will be. Orinda Association President Bill Waterman and board of directors member Diane Lautz attended the city council meeting to discuss plans for the parade.

Former Orinda Association president Carlos Baltozano tried to speak on the matter, but was prevented by technical difficulties at the Zoom meeting. Latika Malkani, working as a captain with the OA on the parade, said that safety has been a priority measure, with plans to double volunteers to maintain social distancing. Malkani said that while she is concerned about the risk of community

transmission, there have already been a large number of community events in Orinda, including graduation ceremonies and parties. "Orinda has been out, but we are not seeing a rise in infections," she said. She added that Orinda has an extremely high vaccination rate, with over 80% having received at least one shot, which will be higher by July 4.

Shannon Pedroni said, "It would be so wonderful to have a Fourth of July parade this year. We have been so careful; we'll come masked and keep apart. I would feel comfortable and confident," she said, while her 6-year-old daughter told the council, "I want a Fourth of July parade!"

... continued on Page A12

Civic News A1-A12 Lafayette council approves beacon alert at St. Perpetua crosswalk -- Page A2 Public Safety A8 MOFD board OK's grant use for software - Page A8	Life in Lamorinda B1-B5 World War II vet, age 99, takes time to reflect on a life well lived - Page B1	Healthy Lifestyle B3 Local doctor discusses supplements, fads and health - Page B3	Sports C1-C4 Next steps for two local sports stars, Jordan Allred and Matai Bell - Page C1 and C2	Our Homes D1-D20 Living retaining wall pits Mother Nature against herself - Page D1
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