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Recent tree mitigation work being done by Caltrans on Highway 24 near St. Stephens Drive, on El Miso Ranch Road.

Photo courtesy MOFD

## Dead trees along Highway 24 removed to promote safety

By Sora O'Doherty

Beginning in late December, Caltrans maintenance personnel have been removing potentially hazardous trees beside state route 24 between First Street in Lafayette and the Orinda exit. The trees were primarily dead and dying Monterey pines.

"The project is much more complex than simply falling trees in a forest. Crews must use a large crane to remove the trees one piece at a time to keep roads open and the public and employees safe," said Caltrans Bay Area's Deputy of Maintenance Parviz Lashai. The project goal is to remove more than 100 dead trees along the highway at a

cost of just over \$150,000.

According to Marcus Wagner, Caltrans public information officer, the increase in tree mortality is most likely due to stress brought about by several years of severe drought and invasive pests such as bark beetles. Dead or dying "red-needle" trees are of concern as the needles can become flying embers and help create the conditions for rapid wildfire spread. In their weakened condition, these trees could also possibly fall and obstruct portions of the roadway.

Wagner told Lamorinda Weekly that approximately 40 dead trees were targeted for removal with 20 trees removed so far. Caltrans' contractor estimates another 10 days of work. To prevent prob-

lems with erosion, crews are removing the trees, but leaving the roots in place. The work covers about a two-mile stretch of Highway 24, from mile marker 3.00 to 5, in and around the cities of Orinda and Lafayette.

Both the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District applauded the work being completed prior to the summer fire season. MOFD Fire Marshal Jeff Isaacs said, "Wildfire prevention needs to be a year-round project to keep our communities safe." Residents are encouraged to check their property for dead or dying trees and take advantage of the winter and spring months to remove them well before wildfire prevention inspections begin on June 1.

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## Back to school in the time of Omicron



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Miramonte High School students head to cars and homes after regular school dismissal on the afternoon of Jan. 13.

By Sora O'Doherty

Everybody is working hard to keep Lamorinda students in school, even as the Omicron variant of the coronavirus sends positive tests in the schools up sharply. For administrators and parents, and maybe for students, the things on their minds are primarily how to access testing and keeping track of those rising numbers of cases, hoping to see an equally sharp downturn soon.

Although illness and hospitalizations from the variant have also jumped up at both the state and county levels, Lamorinda schools, as well as Las Lomas in Walnut Creek at the high school level, are not seeing any hospitalizations to date among either students or staff, according to Acalanes Union High School District Superintendent John Nickerson. Nickerson reported that absences are currently running at 10 to 14% (higher than the normal 4%) but that campuses feel relatively normal and classes don't feel empty. Nevertheless, he said, anxiety and concern is increased in both staff and students, as they try to negotiate the highly contagious Omicron variant COVID-19 surge.

"We believe students are home with COVID-19 symptoms (where in past years they might have come to school) and probably some parents who are holding students home as a precaution," Nickerson explained, adding that the absence rate dropped each day since peaking at all schools a week ago Thursday/Friday.

Safety protocols are in force at all local schools. ... continued on Page A7

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The healing properties of houseplants - Page D1





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# Special joint session identifies arduous next steps in Housing Element process

By Lou Fancher

The council at a special joint session on Jan. 10 heard an update on the Housing Element of the city's General Plan from Jim Cervantes, a member of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). Joining him and other GPAC members were Lafayette Planning & Building Director Greg Wolff and Housing Consultant Diana Elrod as well as members of the Planning Commission. An initial draft report of the Housing Element is due to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) by June 1 and will result in recommendations for revisions before a final draft must be submitted by the end of January 2023 for certification.

Cervantes said GPAC is halfway through the three-part Housing Element plan that must meet the requirements for Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH) mandated by Assembly Bill 686, which passed into law in 2018. The three parts include a background data and housing needs document GPAC approved and submitted to the Planning Commission last

summer; a goals, policies and programs outline with 10 goals GPAC will complete by Jan. 20 and forward to the commission; and a land use plan that will identify sites representing housing development opportunities in the city.

The site inventory remains "a hill to climb," Cervantes said, and involves careful consideration to conform with existing housing parameters for development projects. Sites of less than an acre or in locations where buildings already exist and would need to be removed if selected as AFFH sites are impractical, for example. GPAC's goal is to have the inventory complete and submitted to the commission by March 8, with the expectation the Planning Commission would be enabled to present a draft to the city council for approval at a meeting in May.

"There's a lot that has to be processed in a relatively short period of time," he said. "At the GPAC, we really set out to try to meet the schedule because we know we're on the front end of this and what we do not want to have happen is have the Planning Commission, or, god forbid, the Council,

backed into a time corner."

Vice Mayor Carl Anduri asked about the June 1 deadline and who established it. Elrod explained the State of California in 2022 has three months (previously, it was two months) to review all draft Housing Elements, which places the return of the draft with recommendations for changes arriving back in front of the city in September. Elrod said another full public process review is required and all changes completed by the end date of Jan. 31, 2023.

Calling it an "extraordinary amount of work to get done by then," she said the council, GPAC and the Planning Commission will need to be aggressive to stay in compliance with the state's rules. Wolff noted that the sites inventory would be expedited because it will not name specific sites but will refer to them in aggregate.

Elrod's presentation on AFFH requirements highlighted several provisions of importance: namely, housing element plans that prohibit discrimination in terms of whether the development involves sale, rental or subsidized housing and housing that specifically addresses

patterns of discrimination that have happened nationwide.

A 70-page booklet from HCD outlines guidance to communities for developing fair housing in five additional areas: 1) Targeted Outreach: showing how protected classes were included in gathering input and how public sessions were not restricted to "typical" populations in a community; 2) Assessment of Fair Housing: the plan must demonstrate how fair practices will be enforced and must include data assessing the disparities in wealth and education and other areas of possible inequity in a community; 3) Contributing Factors: Examination of how Lafayette compares to other nearby areas must be considered. Elrod said, for example, "Is Lafayette more White than nearby regions?" She said data shows pockets of Asian people exist in the city, but not as many people who identify as Latinx. She said Lafayette has high resources in terms of tax allocation that goes to its good schools and progressive environmental policies and has no low resources areas; 4) Sites: communities are obligated to establish housing element sites that create a more bal-

anced environment and city's must give examples of how it is actively working to counter fair housing resistance from residents, developers and others; and 5) Goals and Policies: Lafayette must identify policies, programs and timelines that make clear the solutions to problems due to inequities and how outreach will attract applicants that fit AFFH goals.

Elrod said community engagement meetings and programs that involve residents and protected classes will be vital.

Asked by several council members about outreach efforts, Elrod said there will be initiatives to reach faith communities, renters, people living with disabilities, residents who have experienced exclusionary home association practices or other housing problems but have not filed formal complaints and other marginalized groups. Another question about enticing developers to present AFFH-qualifying projects, Elrod said was a "great question." Creating a housing trust fund or offering developers the chance to pay an in-lieu-of fee are ideas up for consideration.



## Lafayette Volunteer Opportunities

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# ARPA funds distribution comes into greater focus for Lafayette

By Lou Fancher

At the first city council meeting of 2022 on Jan. 10, recommendations for new, "immediate needs" allocations related to the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds dominated an update from

ARPA subcommittee members. HDL Companies Principal/Managing Director Barry Foster led the presentation, with input from subcommittee members Vice Mayor Carl Anduri and Council Member Gina Dawson. The council's approval was sought for expen-

ditures of \$920,000 from ARPA funds for assistance to households, small businesses and restaurants, the nonprofit Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE), the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Building, and upgrades at the Lafayette Community Center.

In November 2021, the council had approved the ARPA first tranche spending plan in the amount of \$1,945,555. Items identified as TBD were tabled for a Dec. 13 meeting, at which time concerns about using ARPA funds to purchase the Lafayette Park Theater were discussed. The council authorized the city manager to move forward with using general funds to finance the Park Theater Grant Agreement and other TBD items up for review were tabled until the meeting on Jan. 10.

Foster at the meeting presented details of the new allocations recommended by the subcommittee, explaining the city has currently allocated a little over \$1.67 million. Among the recommendations are \$1,000 for city website development aimed at providing informational resources for residents, especially households most negatively impacted by the pandemic; \$159,000 for partnering with Lafayette Partners in Education to examine a mental health program expansion for children attending schools in the Lafayette School District; \$100,000 to develop marketing programs to help downtown businesses with recovery from the pandemic; \$100,000 for small business technical assistance (a development center was one example of a small business resource);

... continued on Page A3



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# Business Person of the Year selection hits a high note with Lamorinda Music co-owner John McCormick



Photo Colleen McCormick

John McCormick at Lamorinda Music in downtown Lafayette.

## By Diane Claytor

Last year was a good year for Lafayette's John McCormick. The co-owner of Lamorinda Music completed his second term as president of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. His popular store was selected by Diablo Magazine readers as the East Bay's 2021 Best Musical Instrument Store. And he ended the year by being named the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year, an honor McCormick says was both surprising and extremely gratifying.

Music has always played an important role in McCormick's life. He met his wife (and business co-owner), Colleen, while both played alto saxophone in

the Cal Marching Band. He still plays with both the Cal Alumni Band and the California Repercussions.

In 2009, music took on even more significance to McCormick. Colleen McCormick, who had been a science instructor, decided to change careers. After contemplating various options, the couple elected to open a music store. "We thought about what we know and like and music was the clear answer," John McCormick said.

Acknowledging they had no experience with small business ownership, the McCormicks did their due diligence, visiting various music stores for ideas and to learn what worked and what didn't.

... continued on Page A9

# ARPA funds distribution comes into greater focus for Lafayette

... continued from Page A2

\$200,000 to local restaurants to support outdoor dining; \$90,000 in assistance to ensure the long-term viability of the Veterans Memorial building, a nonprofit that due to decreased rentals during the pandemic is experiencing significant revenue declines; and \$270,000 in HVAC and ventilation improvements at the Community Center. Foster noted the new allocations are \$920,000 in total.

Foster said he was still reviewing the United States Treasury's 437-page document that was released last week with more ARPA rules. He indicated it will provide more flexibility in the use of funds, especially for small cities. In the case of Lafayette, adjustments to the standard revenue loss (up to \$10 million) can be made and the new rules will allow ARPA allocations to be used for general city services and recovery from the pandemic.

Council Member Dawson note that the subcommittee's "immediate needs" recommendations are based on helping Lafayette households and families as well as on addressing the needs of small businesses in the community.

Council Member Wei-Tai Kwok asked about the Veterans building and if the \$90,000 allocation would only allow the nonprofit to meet funding needs through June, but might cause them to "collapse" shortly thereafter. Foster said more ARPA funds coming in the summer months will be applied to meet the subcommittee's goal to provide more

funding in the future, although funding parameters that shift continually, he said, leave the final determination unknown. Vice Mayor Anduri said the organization with this immediate need funding can get to the end of their fiscal year and deferred maintenance projects will allow them to stay stable, assuming events resume by the summer.

The council then discussed the LPIE funding for mental health services delivered to students. Council Member Susan Candell expressed concern that the benefits were distributed equitably to all schools in the district. Dawson said LPIE will be active in facilitation the money being distributed to the district; after which the district makes sure funds are dispensed equitably to all schools in its jurisdiction.

In a brief discussion about the \$500,000 drawn from general funds to purchase the Park Theater and how those funds might be replaced, Foster said, "You have to do these things without knowing if ARPA rules will allow the city to offset the costs." While awaiting the arrival of new ARPA ruling on city funds allocations, Foster reiterated that when approved by council in November 2021, the timing necessary to purchase the theater meant making the decision to take the money out of the general fund and then deal with the resolution of it later.

Council voted unanimously to approve the recommendations for "immediate needs" funding as presented in the staff report.



**Lafayette Public Meetings**

### City Council

Regular Meeting  
Monday, Jan. 24, 7 p.m.  
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel:  
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

### Planning Commission Meeting

Monday, Feb. 7, 7 p.m.  
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube  
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

### Design Review

Wednesday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m. Zoom  
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube  
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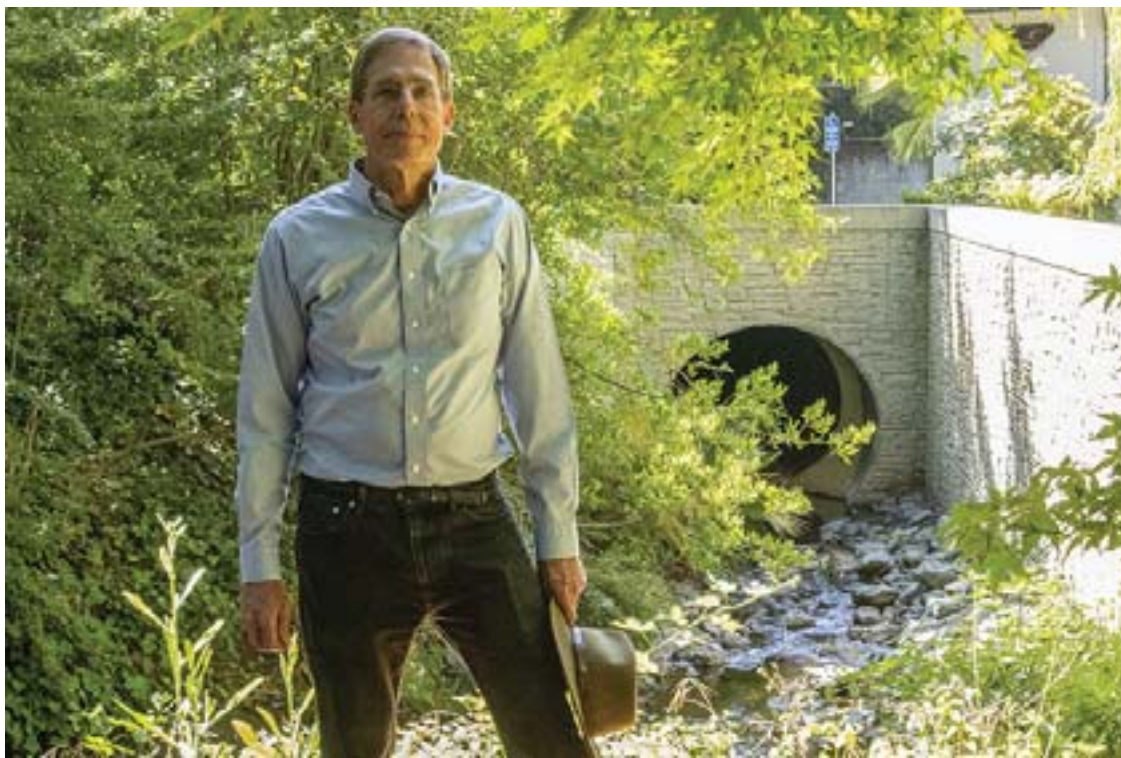
**Moraga Citizens' Network:**

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

# Moraga Town Council performs their version of Musical Chairs

By Vera Kochan

Moraga Mayor Renata Sos called a Special Meeting of the town council on Jan. 5 that was open to the public via Zoom, in order to discuss December's mayor and vice mayor selections. The move was prompted by Sos in order to continue her hopes that the council could set aside their differences and "move forward" for the good of the community – a common



New Moraga Vice Mayor Steve Woehleke

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theme of the evening.

"I felt that recent events warranted having this council get together to address thoughtfully, but in short order, an issue that appears to be driving a deep wedge in our community," began Sos. "We have tonight an opportunity to discuss how to start a healing process. My hope for this evening is that this council will take steps to help bridge the divide in a way that will allow this council and this town to credibly and effectively get on with the business of serving our community and tackling the many issues that will come before us in 2022." Sos also mentioned that the town seems to be split down the middle regarding last month's mayor and vice mayoral seating results.

Sos stated that Council Member Steve Woehleke had approached her regarding a possible alternative to the outcome and maybe a solution to the discord.

Woehleke's scenario would allow for Sos to serve as mayor for the first half of 2022 with himself continuing as vice mayor; then mid-year the roles would reverse with Woehleke as mayor and Sos as vice mayor.

Woehleke regretted putting the new vice mayor, Sona Makker, in the position of having to vacate her seat, and admitted that he shouldn't have nominated her to begin with, given her short tenure on the council.

If Woehleke's proposed scenario met with council agreement, the Jan. 12 Regular Town Council Meeting would see Sos continuing in her mayoral role with Woehleke serving as vice mayor (both pledging to work collaboratively) until no later than May 25 – the midway point of council meetings – when the roles would be reversed.

Makker requested an opportunity in the future for council to receive and examine any feedback made regarding the new situation as to whether it's working, and if not, how to adjust it.

During the Public Comment portion of the Jan. 5

meeting, the handful of comments that were forthcoming was divided down the middle.

Woehleke's explanation of the proposal "continues Moraga's tradition of appropriately progressing the vice mayor position to mayor position, and traditionally the vice mayor is the vice mayor in preparation for becoming the mayor. Avoiding switching immediately has several advantages. It allows us a cool-down period to work things out organizationally; it avoids potential rework by staff for the 2022 planning that has already begun; it also enables making a seamless transition between the mayor and the vice mayor at the appropriate time; and it allows for a logical progression of Renata to mayor for the year 2023."

"I am supporting this," stated Makker. "I do not take any issue with the fact that the vice mayor title is irrelevant to me. It is irrelevant to my commitment to being a volunteer on the council, so I'm okay with the piece that refers to the vice mayor being switched."

Before agreeing to the new scenario Council Member Teresa Onoda wanted some assurances. "I'm hoping that this coming year we do not have any more disruptor-in-chiefs in this council, and that we all work together and not try to stir up the town with things that are not true," she said.

"We all love this town," Onoda continued. "We want to do the best that we can for this town and for the town people; and we are volunteers." She expressed the desire that all council members treat each other with respect. "I hope that everyone else will reflect and see how we can move this year – 2022 – in a new direction, thanks to Steve. So, I am for this, but I wanted to make it very clear, what I've seen in the past and what I do not want to see in the future."

No town council action was taken on Jan. 5, because the topic was not properly agendized, but staff listed it as a consent item on the Jan.

12 council meeting agenda where there was an opportunity to pull it for further discussion. The item was approved and Sos officially retained her mayoral position, with Woehleke officially continuing as vice mayor through, at the very latest, May 25 (at which point the roles will be reversed to the end of the year). Makker's title reverts back to council member.

Woehleke is no stranger to volunteering his services to Moraga. A career with Chevron helped steer him into leadership assignments involving decision-making and facilitating skills for operating organizations worldwide. As such, he often served as either chair or president while volunteering over six years on the town's Design Review Board, 10 years on the Planning Commission, five years with the Hacienda Foundation board of directors, and as an active member of Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley.

With regards to the newly adopted scenario, Woehleke replied, "I'm confident that the Moraga Town Council will be successful with this organization. Renata and I have demonstrated our ability to work together for the benefit of Moraga's citizens. We are committed to continuing our positive working relationship, and I believe all the of town council are committed to success."

Woehleke stated that community feedback regarding the new arrangement has been "almost consistently very positive. (The) general message is that the compromise deals with the reality as it is, and allows the town to move forward."

Giving kudos to Makker for stepping aside as vice mayor, Woehleke added, "Credit for acceptance of the compromise should go to Renata. She embraced the compromise and visibly endorsed it. The town council will be able to support the town consistent with our responsibilities. This is the driver for the compromise, for both Renata and me."

## Local Agency Investment Fund designees for Moraga are updated

By Vera Kochan

Moraga is a participant in the Local Agency Investment Fund created in 1977, as an investment option for local governments and special districts in California. In April of 1983, the town council authorized the investment of Moraga's monies into this account, which are not needed for the daily running of the town. Currently the "rainy-day" balance stands at \$13 million.

According to the www.treasurer.ca.gov website, "This program offers local agencies the opportunity to participate in a major portfolio, which invests hun-

dreds of millions of dollars, using the investment expertise of the State Treasurer's Office professional investment staff at no cost to the taxpayer. All investments and LAIF claims are audited on a daily basis by the State Controller's Office as well as an internal audit process. The LAIF has grown from 293 participants and \$468 million in 1977, to 2,396 participants

and \$36.3 billion at the end of December 2021."

Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg's Jan. 12 staff report to the town council explained that "LAIF requires a resolution to be in place that names positions and offices authorized to make deposits to and withdrawals from the Town's account.

... continued on next Page

**Town Council:** Wednesday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m.  
**Planning Commission:** Tuesday, Feb. 1, 7 p.m.,  
**Park and Recreation Commission:** Monday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m.,  
**Moraga School District Board Meetings:** Tuesday, Feb. 8, 6 p.m. www.moraga.k12.ca.us.



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# Town staff's analysis of Moraga helps to guide council's 2022 goals and priorities



Photo Storm Drain Master Plan

One of the town's challenges in the coming year is funding infrastructure projects.

By Vera Kochan

Department heads on the town staff came together to create a report to the town council discussing Moraga's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. With a cumulative 182 years of experience working for over 20 municipal agencies, not to mention at least 75,000 hours for Moraga, the town's executive directors are more than qualified for the task. The purpose of the analysis was to give council members a better understanding of the status quo prior to formulating a Town Council 2022 Goals and Priorities list.

During an informative Jan. 12 slide presentation by Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg, the topics for discussion ran the gamut from the good news to the bad. Starting with the good news, as anyone knows who lives here, Moraga's schools are powerhouses when it comes to education; the parks, open spaces and recreational programs have much to offer; its residents are extremely educated with high average household incomes; Moraga ranks in the top 13% of the state's low financial risk; there's a stable revenue base; accurate and transparent financial record keeping; low-cost police services and low crime rate; a town attorney with 30 years of town experience; various community organizations and volunteers; a dedicated town staff geared toward customer service; and a creative and collaborative executive team.

Determined as the town's weaknesses are that Moraga has only a 5.3% share of property tax revenue (the lowest in the county); a minimal staff handles increasing workloads which leads to employee burnout and a low capacity for special projects; continual loss of institutional knowledge

from employee exits; an Unfunded Pension Liability due to past deferrals and CalPERS losses; absence of many infrastructure grant funds due to insufficient public transit, strong demographics and being in a high resourced area; aging infrastructure (storm drains, etc.); and inadequate evacuation routes.

There are dozens of opportunities that the town can take advantage of such as the \$4.2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds available to repair and maintain the storm drains; development of Palos Colorados and Town-wide Recreation and Open Space Plan; increase community engagement; Advanced Planning Initiative Phase II funding; increase collaboration on land use issues; increase the use of technology for greater efficiency and transparency; refinance 2013 Certificates of Participation in April 2023; continue to evaluate insourcing/outsourcing; increase efficiency of town council meetings; succession planning; step up relationship with Saint Mary's College; conduct labor negotiations and update Personnel Rules; improve broadband connection and replace Virtual Private Network (VPN) with a cloud-based system; implement Facility Generation and Energy Efficiency Study recommendations; and consider future allocation of Measure K, General Fund revenue to unfunded infrastructure needs.

Now for the bad news. Moraga has an aging infrastructure and an increase in cost and scope of fire abatement; the unfunded legislative mandates have made significant impacts on the cost and method of service delivery across all departments; increasing competition from outside agencies makes it difficult to attract or retain qualified employees; inflation is

taking its toll on the cost of goods and services; the volatility of CalPERS returns and changing economic and political conditions; an increase in issue resolution through legal actions; a highly politicized development environment; the increase in state mandates results in loss of local control with regards to development and land use; and the enormous amount of misinformation regarding town business via unofficial channels.

Town staff has some recommendations for the council's 2022 goals. High on the list is to develop Palos Colorados and the Town-wide Recreation and Open Space Plan. The town recently received a \$2.25 million payment from the Palos Colorados developer. Possible use of the funds could include park and open space improvements; improve the nearby trail system; construct projects and improvements within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Moraga Commons Park Site Specific Master Plan, and the Hacienda de las Flores Conceptual Feasibility Study. The funds could also be used to maintain Mullholland Ridge and contribute to the acquisition of more open space with an eye toward development impact fees. The council has also discussed using some of the funds to cover the unfunded pension liability and other unfunded infrastructural needs. Additionally, the use of the \$4.2 million ARPA funds available for revenue loss and repair/maintenance of the storm drain system must be determined.

Another recommendation is to increase public outreach and community engagement. Currently the town has several ways to communicate information to the public via the About Town newsletter, NextDoor, Facebook, Instagram and Nixle. By adding additional public outreach it is hoped that the amount of unofficial misinformation regarding town business will decrease.

Advanced Planning Initiative funding to complete the Bollinger Valley Rezone Phase I and update the town's General Plan needs an additional \$169,000 for Fiscal Year 2022-23. Phase II funding needs \$314,000 for FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25.

Staff recommends the refinancing of 2013 Certificates of Participation at a lower rate in April 2023. The COPS were for street and storm drain improvements after the passage of Measure K when the town leveraged the local sales tax revenue and issued \$7.72

million.

Staff suggested implementing funding of a Facility Generation and Energy Efficiency Study (which was included in the FY 2021-22 Adopted Budget). Based on the results, funding for capital projects could be included in

the FY 2022-23 Budget.

Lastly, staff determined that all Measure K revenue will most likely need to be allocated to the 2022-23 Worst-First Pavement Reconstruction project and carried over into FY 2023-24.

# Local Agency Investment Fund designees for Moraga are updated

... continued from Page A4

Individuals in authorized positions or offices must then provide evidence of office or position as well as identification to LAIF in order to become authorized."

When the account was first set up in 1983, the mayor, vice mayor, town manager and town treasurer were all authorized. In October 2003, the position of finance manager was added. That title changed to finance director in April 2009, and changed again to administrative services director in June 2010. While there are five autho-

rized offices and positions, currently only the town manager and administrative services director can order the deposit or withdrawal of funds from LAIF.

Given the constant rotation of the mayor and vice mayor positions every year, it is not considered in the best practice to keep those positions on an authorized level. As such, staff felt it prudent to replace those two positions and the treasurer with the police chief. The staff report reasons, "This recommended change is favorable as a thorough background investigation, including a review of the

individual's credit history, assets, criminal and traffic history, legal history and pre-employment review is required and completed as part of the town's hiring process for town manager, administrative services director and police chief." Having three authorized positions to the account is necessary in the event that one individual becomes unavailable, because some transaction processes require two signatures.

The town council unanimously approved the resolution.

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# Inga Miller relies upon experience to be an effective vice mayor

By Sora O'Doherty

As she goes into her second term as vice mayor of Orinda, Inga Miller has three big priorities. First, she wants to keep working on responding to the climate emergency, improving the city's fire safety, evacuation routes, and storm drains. She sees a connection between those things, and believes that they define emergency preparedness in Orinda. She is interested in vegetation management to protect the community, and also urges people living in high fire danger areas not to wait for evacuation orders, but to leave as soon as possible if a fire is threatening their community.

Second, she wants to move forward with downtown planning. She feels that everyone has a real sense that the project is moving forward. The city council has been tasked with completing the housing element to find space for many more homes in Orinda, and has combined that task with the project to revitalize the downtown. Miller mentions that the

housing element poses a huge challenge, and this time the number of houses the city has to plan for is far greater than in the past. "It's no small task," she says.

High fire areas need to be protected, such as El Toyonal, and the fire chief has some discretion. Downtown planning includes restoration of the creek in downtown Orinda, which Miller says the community supports. Miller will continue her assignment on the downtown subcommittee along with Council Member Nick Kosla, whom she says is a tremendous asset.

The new vice mayor's third priority is continuing the work of integrating new staff. Orinda, like other places, lost a lot of staff members and department heads during the pandemic. Miller said that the new Orinda police chief, Ryan Sullivan, is a great fit and has been doing a lot of good work behind the scenes. Miller says that with a lot of new people has come a wonderful new energy. The city also has a relatively new city man-

ager, David Biggs. New administrative services director Douglas Alessio has begun work less than a month ago.

Miller discussed the job of performing a balancing act in government. For fire safety, one might think it would be good to reduce vegetation to a minimum, but to do so would lose the ecological benefits we gain from trees. She is happy to see dead trees being removed while live trees are kept, and also happy to see that things have gone as well as they have in the Grizzly Peak area. She is also interested in other ecological developments, such as bioswales, landscape features that collect polluted stormwater runoff, soak it into the ground, and filter out pollution.

Drainage issues loom large for the city now. Miller sees wildfires and storm drains as two sides of the same coin. After a fire, the lack of vegetation can cause flooding. Drains erode over time, and many of the drains in Orinda were installed 50 or 60 years ago. Fortunately, most of Orinda is above the

flood plain, but it is time to repair the infrastructure, Miller says. After learning the ropes of local government during her first term, Miller sees the upcoming year as one where her time as vice mayor can be effective, taking advantage of her experience to help achieve the goals of the community.

From time to time, Miller says, subcommittee assignments can change, but many believe that council members are more effective if they stay on. Solid waste is one area that benefits from not changing because there is a lot to learn. Miller sits on the JPA along with Council Member Amy Worth.

Although it is hard to feel the vibrancy of downtown now because of the pandemic, Miller says there are signs of life, and she is encouraged that planning is going on behind the scenes. She mentioned that the minipark at the intersection of Camino Pablo and Brookwood is coming together now.

Miller's biggest goal is keeping Orinda as a wonderful and coveted place to live.

# City honors garden club for holiday wreaths, Boy Scout volunteers help

By Sora O'Doherty

Boy Scouts from Troop 237 on Jan. 9 assisted the Orinda Garden Club by taking down the 60 wreaths that had brightened downtown Orinda over the holidays, and on Jan. 11, the city council honored the club with a certificate of recognition for the holiday wreath program. In introducing the matter, Mayor Dennis Fay commented that his family had guests in town over the holidays and they were very impressed by the wreaths.

Present on the Zoom meeting to accept the honor were Orinda Garden Club copresidents Linda Thompson and Laura Swaczuk and co-chairs of the wreath program,



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Scout Troop 237, back row, from left: Michael Robinson, Ben Hollerbach, Grayson Bloes, Hayden MacKenzie; front: Louie Windhurst

Shelly Gilligan and Margaret Stahle. Thompson explained that the theme this year is environmental kindness, with an emphasis on recycling and reusing. To that end, she gave a shout out to Scout Troop 237, whose members took down the wreaths and carefully took them apart.

Council Member Amy Worth commented, "I don't think that any museum takes the care that the garden club does in hanging the wreaths." Vice Mayor Inga Miller, who helped the Scouts prepare the wreaths for recycling or reuse at St. Mark's Church on Jan. 9 shared "how special it is to have this beautification that we wouldn't have without the generous support of

the garden club as well as the hours of effort." Miller added, "as one of the members of the recycle smart board, thank you for the extra effort that went into the recycling of the wreaths." The greenery was placed in bins for composting and the wreath frames went to Holly's Homegrown in Lafayette for reuse. Bows were carefully removed for use next year. The only thing that went into the trash were very small zip ties.

The Scouts from Troop 237 who participated were Michael Robinson, Ben Hollerbach, Grayson Bloes, Hayden MacKenzie, and Louie Windhurst, with assistance and driving from their parents.

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**Downtown Planning & Housing Element Council Subcommittee**  
 Special Meeting  
 Thursday, Jan. 20, 4:30 p.m.  
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**Planning Commission**  
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**Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission**  
 Wednesday, Feb. 9, 6:30 p.m.  
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## Back to school in the time of Omicron

... continued from Page A1

These include masking, and higher protection masks are being made available to students and staff, Nickerson said. N95 masks, which can be reused, have been distributed to students and staff, and single use surgical masks are also available. Masking is encouraged, even outdoors. AUHSD has canceled field trips, limited spectators at indoor events, and required vaccinations for all volunteers. Nickerson said that there are fewer volunteers at the high school level, and they are mostly used for driving sports teams to away games. Students are eating outdoors and are encouraged to practice social distancing.

Although the high schools feel a bit normal, according to Nickerson, quite a few teachers are out, having tested positive for COVID-19. If they are asymptomatic or not very ill, there are systems in place to allow them to use the Zoom electronic meeting application to be present in their classrooms, along with an in-person substitute teacher.

Nickerson also said that school health officials hope that the new COVID surge will peak in about seven days, with hospitalizations declining a week or two later. "We hope that the decline will be fast and steep," he said. Notably, South Africa experienced such a rapid steep decline after a sharp surge of the Omicron variant, but Nickerson pointed out that not only is the population of South Africa much smaller than the United States, but it is also much younger, which might influence the rate of decline.

California has recognized that remote learning was not supportive of mental health, emotional health, and academic well-being in the way that in-person learning is, according to the Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey. In a news release on Jan. 11, county health officer Ori Tzvieli said, "We have learned a lot of hard lessons over the last two years as we have worked through this pandemic." While the Omicron variant is highly contagious, he said, it seems to cause milder symptoms than earlier strains of the virus, and children are

less likely to be infected in supervised settings such as schools with masking and testing requirements.

Testing has been the subject of a great deal of community concern. Social media has been flooded with people trying to acquire at-home tests or local testing sites with appointments available. At the federal level, President Biden has promised to make more tests available to schools nationally, and the county has been distributing test kits to the public. AUHSD picked up over 5,000 take-home tests on New Year's Eve and worked with principals on Jan. 2. The tests were delivered on Jan. 3 to about 90% of the AUHSD population. Everybody who came to pick up a test received one, Nickerson said. There are also testing programs going through local schools for targeted populations, with testing available somewhere in Lamorinda every weekday and test supplies are constantly replenished. "We have people working very hard and creatively on it and we have maintained our inventory," Nickerson said.

The county has also distributed take-home test kits. Jill Ray from Supervisor Candace Andersen's office reported to the Orinda mayor's January liaison meeting that the state has been significantly expanding testing sites, and that a shipment of 800 test kits from the federal government were given out by the county and were gone within 30 minutes on Jan. 11. On Jan. 14 the county distributed more masks, as well as expired but usable N95 masks. The county hoped to distribute more test kits through the county libraries, but Orinda library manager Michael Beller reported that the plan had been shelved owing to staffing difficulties at the libraries, which have managed to remain open by swapping staff around as needed.

Each of the local school districts is maintaining a dashboard, although each dashboard differs in what the district chooses to report. All, however, are reporting positive cases, while some include information about quarantine status of staff and students. The dashboards are updated at least weekly, and most are

updated more often.

New guidance was issued Jan. 15 by Moraga School District Superintendent Julie Parks, who noted that cases seem to have stabilized over the last two weeks, and she is hopeful that they will see numbers dropping henceforth. She announced a change to home testing guidance, expanding the use of home testing in school settings. If a student who is out of school sick experiences an improvement in symptoms after 24-hours and the student tests negative with a home COVID-19 test, the student can return to school.

The new guidance means that families will be notified of an exposure in a class and given options for testing between Day 3 and Day 5. Students with negative tests will be permitted to remain in school, regardless of vaccination status, and will continue to participate in after-school activities without restriction. Moraga will be moving into a focus on communication and testing accessibility and away from the more individualized contact tracing that they have been doing.

Students who test positive for COVID-19 will still isolate for a minimum of five days and cannot return to school until they have tested negative after Day 5 or completed a 10-day isolation period.

The schools are continuing to do contact tracing, and are following state mandated quarantine protocols. The county follows the state, and protocols change rapidly, sometimes daily. Contra Costa County provides copious information on its website, including information specifically for schools.



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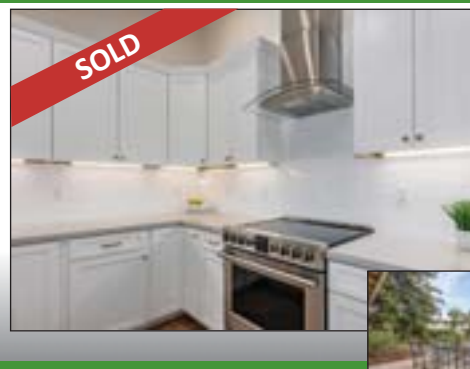
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The school district dashboards can be accessed at the following links:

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<https://www.lafsd.org/dashboard>

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VnM\\_oUPJMSjUBRmNTGMuKodf8w4yfEqiTu-VbpEGF78/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VnM_oUPJMSjUBRmNTGMuKodf8w4yfEqiTu-VbpEGF78/edit)

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# Contra Costa County updates COVID-19 guidelines

By Sora O'Doherty

County government works as a conduit, adapting developments from the federal and state governments and passing along information, rules and guidelines to local governments, including the cities of Lafayette and Orinda and the town of Moraga. In addition, the county provides services to residents, including centers for COVID-19 vaccinations, testing, and distribution of home test kits and other supplies. Lamorinda is within county supervisorial District 2, represented by supervisor Candace Andersen. Updates on COVID are processed almost daily by the county.

As of Jan. 13, for example, the county published updated information for schools and childcare facilities. County health pointed out that, despite the concerns about children being in the classroom during a pandemic, the risk at school is actually lower than the risk outside of school.

Updated guidelines from the state set forth the requirements for isolation and quarantine for K-12 settings. This is a subject that has caused considerable confusion, as was demonstrated by the national media at a Jan. 7 press conference held by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

California currently permits children to return to

school after they first test positive for COVID-19 if a subsequent test taken on or after day five of isolation is negative and the child doesn't have symptoms or symptoms are improving. An over-the-counter home antigen test can be used to end isolation. In addition, the state recently updated its guidance for students exposed to COVID-19 in a K-12 setting, with updates to individual-level quarantine recommendations and an additional group-tracing approach strategy. All updates can be found on the CA Safe Schools Hub and in the CDPH K-12 School Guidance.

There is different guidance for the general public. Regardless of vaccination status, previous infection or lack of symptoms, everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 is advised to stay home for at least five days. Isolation can end after five days when symptoms are not present or are resolving and there is a negative test, preferably an antigen test. Without a test, isolation can end after day 10, unless there is fever or other symptoms. Upon returning from isolation, individuals are advised to wear a well-fitting mask around other people, especially in indoor settings. Quarantines are recommended for persons who are either unvaccinated or have not yet received a booster dose of vaccine. Where there is no quarantine, individuals are recommended

to test on day five after exposure to a person with COVID-19. If the test is positive, it is recommended that that person follow the isolation recommendations.

However, these guidelines do not apply to health-care or emergency medical services personnel until February. These workers were temporarily exempted from the guidelines by California Gov. Gavin Newsom in an attempt to address the shortage of healthcare workers, a move that was met with disapproval by some health-care workers, according to local media reports. Until Feb. 1 healthcare workers who have tested positive for COVID may return to work immediately, but must wear N95 respirator masks.

The county has also been distributing at-home testing kits to the public on a first come, first served basis when kits are available from the federal government. On Jan. 14 the county also made available a number of N95 masks that were past their expiration date but still considered usable. The county continues to encourage people to have tests at the many testing facilities run by the state and county, and of course to get vaccinated and boosted if eligible.

The first case of the Omicron variant in Contra Costa County was identified on Dec. 18, and since then case rates and hospitalizations in-

creased significantly. The average number of daily new COVID-19 cases in late December had increased 149% over the prior week and hospitalizations had risen 31%. In response, the county reimposed a masking requirement for almost all indoor settings, with an exception for performers at indoor live or recorded settings or events such as music concerts or theatrical plays.

In order to rescind the masking requirement, the county must be in the moderate or yellow tier for at least three consecutive weeks and there must be fewer than 75 COVID hospitalizations in the county. Currently the county remains in the red tier and has over 200 hospitalizations. The county has met the requirement of being more than eight weeks after vaccines were authorized for children aged 5-11, and is very close to meeting the goal of 80% fully vaccinated. Currently, the number stands at 79%. All the criteria must be met before the county can change the requirement for masking in indoor spaces.

As of Jan. 13 Contra Costa County remained in the red tier, indicating that COVID

transmission was at high risk. New daily case rates were up by nearly 75% and hospitalizations were up 84% over the previous week. Both numbers showed an increasing trend. New cases were much higher among those who were unvaccinated, although cases among the vaccinated were also occurring at a lower rate. The lowest rate of cases were among those who were fully vaccinated and boosted. The county has experienced 1,083 deaths from COVID-19, with 91% of deaths occurring among the unvaccinated since vaccines became available on Dec. 15, 2020. Although not the lowest rates in the county, Lamorinda was relatively low in comparison with other localities, with new cases in the past 14 days recorded as 430 for Lafayette, 280 in Moraga, and 386 in Orinda. These numbers still represent a significant jump from last year when numbers of positive cases in each city were in single or double digits only. The number of deaths from COVID in Lamorinda also remains low, with six deaths each for Lafayette and Moraga and 16 deaths total for Orinda.

**Links:**

- <https://cchealth.org>
- <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/overview>
- <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/get-vaccinated>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/t0107-covid-update.html>
- <https://www.covidtests.gov/>

# Wreaths Across America honors nearly 300 local veterans



Submitted by Vanessa Crews

The service of nearly 300 veterans was honored and remembered at the Lafayette Cemetery on Saturday, Dec. 18 at a special Wreaths Across America (WAA) ceremony hosted by the Acalanes Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The name of each veteran was said out loud and a wreath was placed on the gravesite. Mary Carrillo, chapter regent, called the occasion powerful, saying, "I am inspired by the sacrifices of these brave men and women who served our country. It is a privilege to recognize their service."

The chapter was assisted by several organizations including VFW Post 8063,

American Legion Post 517 and Lafayette BSA Troop 284 and the Mt. Diablo HOG Motorcycle Group. Funding for the wreaths at the Lafayette Cemetery comes from donations to Wreaths Across America. All gifts made through Jan. 14 to WAA for the Lafayette Cemetery through the Acalanes DAR Sponsorship page were matched one for one to place wreaths in 2022. Visit the WAA website, [www.wreath-sacrossamerica.org/ca0565](http://www.wreath-sacrossamerica.org/ca0565), or contact Terry Lucido, DAR member and chair of the local event, [tlachenb@aol.com](mailto:tlachenb@aol.com).

Photo provided

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**Moraga-Orinda Fire District**  
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Wednesday, Jan. 19, 6 p.m.  
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**ConFire**  
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**Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 19 - Jan. 8**



Alarms	61
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Traffic	45
Suspicious Circumstances	15
Suspicious Subject	14
Suspicious Vehicle	15
Service to Citizen	38
Patrol Req./Security Check	55
Public/School Assembly Check	4
Supplemental Report	31
Vacation House Check	25

Welfare Check	20
Ordinance Violation	1
<b>Vehicle violations</b>	
Auto Burglary	
3200 Block Glenside Dr.	
3400 Block S Silver Springs Rd.	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Dui Misd	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	
40 Block Green Tree Ct.	
400 Block Corte Rinaldo	
<b>Reckless Driving</b>	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Deer Hill Rd.	
800 Block Mariposa Rd.	
Taylor Blvd./Withers Ave.	
Moraga Rd./Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Springhill Rd.	
40 Block Knox Dr.	
St Marys Rd./Camino Colorados	
<b>Stolen Vehicle Recovery</b>	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
California Shakespeare Festival,	
Ori	
El Nido Ranch Rd./Upper Happy Valley Rd.	
Eb HWay 24/Pleasant Hill Rd	
Tc - Fire And Amb Enroute	
3700 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Tc - Minor Injuries	
Olympic Blvd./Reliez Station Rd.	
Tc - Property Damage	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Rancho View Dr.	
20 Block Lafayette Cir.	
Mt. Diablo Blvd./1St St.	
Deer Hill Rd./Pleasant Hill Rd.	
Mt. Diablo Blvd./Pleasant Hill Rd.	
Tofflemire Dr./Moraga Rd.	
<b>Vehicle Theft</b>	
1100 Block Orchard Rd.	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
<b>Other criminal activity</b>	
Computer Fraud	
600 Block Doreen Way (4)	
3400 Block Golden Gate Way	
Fraud False Pretenses	
3300 Block Hermosa Way	

3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
600 Block Doreen Way	
3200 Block Burton Ct.	
600 Block Doreen Way	
1000 Block Sierra Vista Way	
1300 Block El Curtola Blvd.	
<b>Grand Theft</b>	
3300 Block Moraga Blvd.	
<b>Grand Theft From Veh</b>	
1000 Block Upper Happy Valley Rd	
<b>Grand Theft Veh Parts</b>	
500 Block Florence Dr.	
4000 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
<b>Identity Theft</b>	
1800 Block Reliez Valley Rd.	
600 Block Doreen Way	
<b>Petty Theft</b>	
1100 Block Sierra Vista Way	
1000 Block 2Nd St.	
3300 Block Moraga Blvd.	
1500 Block Rancho View Dr.	
1000 Block Oak Hill Rd.	
<b>Petty Theft From Veh</b>	
3100 Block Somerset Dr.	
600 Block Lancaster Dr.	
3100 Block Kingsley Pl	
<b>Shoplift</b>	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)	
900 Block Moraga Rd.	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (6)	
<b>Nuisance to the Community</b>	
<b>Disturbance-domestic</b>	
300 Block Shire Oaks Ct.	
<b>Disturbing The Peace</b>	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
3500 Block St Marys Rd.	
<b>Loud Noise</b>	
Sessions Rd./Sierra Vista Way	
<b>Public Nuisance</b>	
Mt. Diablo Blvd./Lafayette Cr	
1000 Block Dewing Av	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
2Nd St./Golden Gate Way	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Mt. Diablo Blvd./Golden Gate Way	
<b>Vandalism</b>	
1700 Block Reliez Valley Rd.	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	

1400 Block Edwards Ct.	
10 Block Richelle Ct.	
<b>Other</b>	
<b>Fireworks</b>	
1100 Block Cambridge Dr.	
3800 Block Happy Valley Rd.	
10 Block Warwick Ct.	
<b>Threats</b>	
Police Department	
<b>Trespass</b>	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
<b>Unwanted Guest</b>	
900 Block Moraga Rd.	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)	
<b>Violation Restraining Ord</b>	
Police Department	

**Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 28 - Jan. 9**



Alarms	22
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	8
Traffic	30
Suspicious Circumstances	4
Suspicious Subject	3
Suspicious Vehicle	4
Service to Citizen	42
Patrol Req./Security Check	13
Supplemental Report	9
Vacation House Check	0
Welfare Check	12
Public/School Assembly Check	0
Ordinance Violation	0
<b>Vehicle violations</b>	
Accident Property	
Moraga Rd./Rheem Blvd.	
<b>Auto Burglary</b>	
100 Block Danefield Pl.	
200 Block Paseo Del Rio	
<b>Excessive Speed</b>	
Moraga Way/Ivy Dr.	
<b>Exhibition of Speed</b>	
Taco Bell	

<b>Reckless Driving</b>	
Moraga Rd./Rheem Blvd. (2)	
<b>Other criminal activity</b>	
<b>Grand Theft</b>	
30 Block Ascot Pl.	
<b>Grand Theft From Veh</b>	
100 Block Miramonte Dr.	
<b>Grand Theft Veh Parts</b>	
10 Block Miramonte Dr.	
<b>Petty Theft From Veh</b>	
1000 Block Alta Mesa Dr.	
<b>Shoplift</b>	
Safeway	
<b>Nuisance to the Community</b>	
<b>Disturbance,Domestic</b>	
Not Available	
<b>Disturbing The Peace</b>	
Not Available	
<b>Drunk In Public</b>	
Safeway	
<b>Loud Music</b>	
80 Block Goodfellow Dr.	
<b>Loud Noise</b>	
Not Available (2)	
<b>Loud Party</b>	
Not Available	
<b>Other</b>	
<b>Fireworks</b>	
500 Block Rheem Blvd.	
<b>H&amp;S/Tr Sale Narc</b>	
Dollar Tree	
<b>Transient Contact</b>	
Library	
<b>Trespass W/ Vehicle</b>	
10 Block Sanders Ranch Rd.	
<b>Unwanted Guest</b>	
1800 Block St. Andrews Dr.	



**Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report will be back soon**



## Letters to the editor

**Scott Parker for Mayor of Moraga**

I've lived in Moraga for nine years now and I love and appreciate so many things about the community and the people that live here. That said, when you compare us to the neighboring towns that comprise Lamorinda, it's not hard to see why Moraga feels like it's stuck in third place in the 1980's.

For the last nine years, I've heard the same issues confront the town that, year after year, go unaddressed. The same storm drains that back up and flood streets. The same empty store fronts that don't get leased. The same crumbling buildings that aren't repaired. The same vision for the town that re-

mains on a drawing board.

Enter Scott Parker. I don't know Scott, but I know a person of action when I see one. In case you missed the last edition of Lamorinda Weekly – he's the Moraga resident that spent 4 months picking up 30 years of litter around town with a goal of 'ridding Moraga of litter and making sure it stays that way.' I don't know this, but I am pretty sure Scott didn't waste his time petitioning the town to do a better job cleaning up. He just put trash bags in his car and started doing it himself.

I'm not naïve to the obstacles the town faces to progress. Entrenched views on growth. Wealthy landowners that won't compromise. Traffic. Climate

change. Legal hurdles, limited budgets – I appreciate each one of those present obstacles to progress and that a lot of people have worked tirelessly to make things better.

But Scott's mission stands out in a town that is mired in reasons for 'why we can't' – as a striking example of how we can. He shows us that if you want to make Moraga better, you've got to be willing to do it yourself. Thanks for showing us the way, Scott. And thank you to the many other Morgans that do the same. Let's resolve to be more like them in 2022 if we want to make Moraga better.

Keith Pearce  
Moraga

### Acts of Kindness

I would like to propose a resolution for 2022 that we all can keep. Perform one act of kindness every week. There are about 16,000 residents in Moraga. If we each did one kind thing a week for a year, that would be 832,000 acts. Yes, I'm including the kids.

Last summer the girls on my street left me a painted rock that said, "You're fabulous." I put it on my desk and smile every time I look at it.

Drop a card to a neighbor who is having health problems, pick up a piece of litter, sweep a storm drain clear of

leaves, send a thank you to the fire department, when you bake make an extra for someone who doesn't. It won't have to be much, or cost anything. We have a neighbor who has been dragging our garbage cans out every week and bringing them back after they are emptied. I can't tell you how much my knees and I appreciate that act of kindness. Well, I guess I just did.

Please join me in filling this year with kindness. Hopefully, it will catch on.

Jo Mele  
Moraga

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](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com) for submission guidelines. Email: [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com); Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

## Local foodie family conducts annual taste-test tradition



Photos provided

### Submitted by Craig Coane

The Coane family loves food. Whether it's mom, Karen, cooking her favorite family meals at home, daughter Kayla journaling another entry into her Instagram "thatfooddoe" account, son Michael eating everything in sight to put on extra weight for high school sports, or dad, Craig, and his obsession with tasting different types of foods.

Four years ago the family came up with a novel idea to help ring in the New Year and fill their stomachs after their late night New Year's Eve celebrations: a blind taste test of their favorite foods from local restaurants.

The idea was simple – pick a common food theme and three restaurants that serve similar items. Order the same items from all three restaurants and bring them all home to taste side-by-side. And of course, have a scoring sheet to tabulate the results and pick an overall winner.

"We always talked about doing something like this," said Craig Coane, looking

back to four years ago. "Once we came up with the concept, we couldn't wait to try it."

The first year they chose upscale burger joints, tasting the best burgers, fries, and vanilla shakes at three nearby spots. And they spared no details, even adding the homemade ketchups for each into their scoring sheets.

"Not knowing for sure which item came from which restaurant definitely made it even more fun," Craig Coane recalled.

Lafayette's own Roam was the big winner that year. "We were pretty surprised," Kayla Coane remembered. "We always like Roam but matched up against the competition it really stood out."

After subsequent years with themes that included sushi in 2020 (that's a lot of spicy tuna rolls) and Mexican food in 2021 (last year's version was held in Lake Tahoe where the family lived for a month), this year's edition of the Coane family New Year's Day taste test was an obvious choice for Lamorinda diners: Chinese food.

With a plethora of Chinese restaurant options in

Lamorinda to choose from, the Coanes settled on the three choices from their hometown of Moraga: Chef Chao, China Moon and Golden Palace. With so many food items to choose from, they narrowed it down to four 'go-tos' for most Chinese food lovers: hot and sour soup, pot stickers, chicken chow mein and orange chicken.

One of the keys to success, as the family has learned, is ensuring all food items make it back to their house at the same time to ensure the freshest and hottest comparisons.

"This year was easy," says Karen Coane. "All three restaurants were basically within walking distance!"

Craig and Kayla sped off to grab the food items while Karen and Michael prepped the table and scoring sheets for this year's competition. "We're getting this thing down," says Michael Coane. "We were ready to eat!"

After laying out the enormous feast across their expanded dining room table and pinning their scoring sheets to clip boards, it was go time.

The hot and sour soup winner? A three-way tie. "They were all really good in different ways."

Next up: pot stickers. Again, the Coanes were surprised at how different each pot sticker was prepared. "I used to think pot stickers were pretty much all the same – that is not the case," said Karen. The winner: China Moon. "They just have that classic take on a pot sticker with fresh stuffing and a golden slightly crisp dough."

Their third item: chicken chow mein. With healthy portions and mounds of chow mein to dig through, the Coanes were again surprised by each restaurant's take. "The thickness of the noodles, amount of vegetables and chicken, and overall flavor were very different," recalled Craig Coane. The chow mein winner: Chef Chao.

Finally, orange chicken was the entrée of choice to close out the food eating extravaganza. If you thought orange chicken is the same at every Chinese joint, you are sorely mistaken. "We saw the biggest difference between

restaurants with their take on orange chicken, but the top choice was obvious to all of us," said Michael. The orange chicken champion: Golden Palace.

As Craig gathered all the sheets for the final scoring, the Coanes were happy to see each restaurant had a winning food item. "They were all good," remembers Kayla.

But every great taste test competition needs a champion, and after final tabulations the 2022 champion was Golden Palace.

"We love Chef Chao and have for years," said Karen, "but we're planning to frequent all three restaurants now that we've been able to taste them all side by side."

COVID has made it even more meaningful to come up with traditions that can bring the family together and have a little fun.

Craig added, "This is our way to support local businesses ... and get a great meal at the same time!"

What's on tap for a theme for next year's feast? They're leaning toward Italian.

## Business Person of the Year selection hits a high note with Lamorinda Music co-owner John McCormick

... continued from Page A3

They created a business plan and found the perfect Lafayette location, "less than two miles from home," John McCormick happily notes. The building had originally been a beauty salon and John McCormick remembers that "all the walls were plastered with pink wallpaper. We spent weeks scraping it off."

The goal was to have a warm, friendly, welcoming spot where music is fun and everyone is treated like family and friends, John McCormick states.

Colleen McCormick ran the day-to-day operations of Lamorinda Music in the beginning while John McCormick stuck with that old adage, "Don't quit your day job." He didn't. He continued working in the tech field but spent nights and weekends working at their store. That all changed approximately five years ago when John

McCormick did quit his day job and began working full time in the store.

Lamorinda Music provides instrument sales, rentals and repairs and offers lessons in everything from voice, piano, guitar and various band instruments. They have expanded twice and currently have 13 studios and 30 instructors working with hundreds of students, "from pro musicians, enthusiastic amateurs and wide-eyed elementary students renting their first instruments," McCormick says. The store hosts recitals, group classes, jams and concerts. There are two full-time repair technicians working on a variety of instruments for both individuals and local school districts.

One recent customer, reviewing Lamorinda Music on social media, said, "This place is fantastic, the people who work here all have great knowledge ... and the fact

that you can rent-to-own is absolutely amazing."

Once he began working at the store full time, McCormick joined the board of the Lafayette Chamber and immediately became an active and involved member. In 2020 he was elected president. "I had a vision of all the Chamber could do under my presidency," McCormick says. "I had lots of ideas. And then COVID happened." That, of course, presented very different challenges. According to the Chamber's executive director, Jay Lifson, once COVID hit, goals and projects changed out of necessity and "under John's leadership, we were able to pivot to a new purpose: saving our local economy."

The Chamber worked hard and, McCormick states proudly, "did phenomenal work during the pandemic. The Chamber was, in many ways, the lifeline for local businesses," he says.

While a new Chamber president is typically elected every year, McCormick asked to serve a second term. "John asked for another year," Lifson reports. "He felt he hadn't been able to do all the great things he had planned and he wanted to continue helping our local businesses."

Lifson states that under McCormick's leadership, some really meaningful work was done "and we have more members now than we did before COVID, actually adding 100 new members last year alone."

It wasn't a difficult decision, then, when the time came to select the Chamber's 2022 Business Person of the Year. McCormick more than meets the organization's criteria: Working to support and promote a healthy business climate and enhance lives in Lafayette; modeling excellence in everything he does; giving time and energy to help make Lafayette a com-

munity where people want to live, work and shop; and making us proud to be a member of this community. "John is the perfect mix of nice guy, extremely bright and interested in everything that's happening around him," Lifson says.

As if Lamorinda Music and the Chamber haven't kept McCormick busy enough, he was a Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE) volunteer for 20 years and is currently an active volunteer with the Park Theater Trust. And he has returned to school: McCormick will proudly receive his master's in history from Harvard later this year.

The Chamber's dinner to honor McCormick, originally planned for next month has, unfortunately, been postponed due to COVID; it will be rescheduled as soon as it's safe to do so.



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# Lafayette man heads international body of Rotarian pilots



George Chaffey with his vintage aircraft. Photo provided

down was in Quillayute, Wash.; northernmost in Piney Pinecreek, Minn., along the Canada border; southernmost in Key West, Fla., and easternmost in Eastport, Maine.

Because there is no supplemental oxygen on board, Chaffey rarely flies higher than 12,000 feet, and is prohibited by FAA regulation from exceeding 14,000 feet.

He generally flies between 8,000 and 10,000 feet, as this, he learned, is the most fuel-friendly altitude. As for speed, it is generally in the range of 100 mph.

He says his chief role as leader of the 1,200-member organization is as a goodwill ambassador, “buzzing about like a honeybee” to attend IFFR meetings in different regions of the world.

Have there been any close calls? “Knock on wood, no,” said Chaffey. “No serious mechanical issues. The main nemesis is weather. If the forecast bodes ill, I stay on terra firma.” The plane, named Lady Bird, is hangered at Buchanan airfield in Concord.

## Submitted by Thomas Black

George Chaffey, a longtime resident of Lafayette and a longtime Rotarian, is currently serving as World President of the International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians.

He is one of two remaining charter members of Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, and is a past governor of Rotary District 5160, which embraces 72

clubs in northern California.

Chaffey’s two-year term as World President was highlighted last year by an adventurous 12,000-mile solo journey that hopscotched him about the lower 48 states in his prized 1948 Luscombe plane. He purchased the single-prop, single-wing model 50 years ago, shortly after earning his private pilot license.

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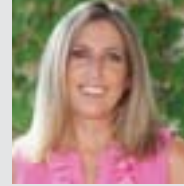
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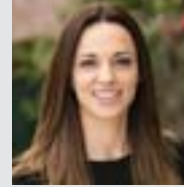
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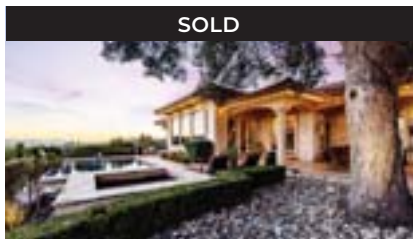
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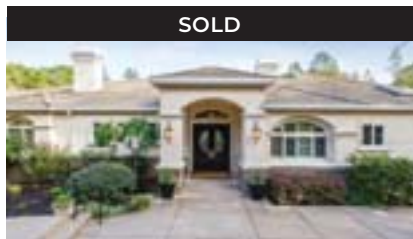
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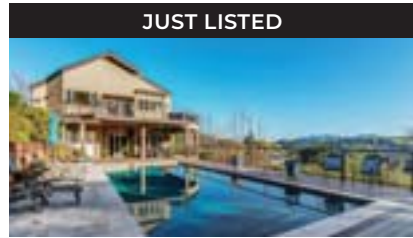
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# ~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

## JMLT campaign underway to save Harvey Ranch



One of the many hiking trails within Harvey Ranch

Photos provided

By Vera Kochan

Anyone who takes a hike along the trails within Harvey Ranch is met with breathtaking views of Moraga and beyond. Hoping to preserve a 143-acre section of the ranch and create a 15,500-acre natural area by connecting the three protected landscapes of Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, San Leandro Watershed and Painted Rock Preserve (which includes Carr Ranch, Buckhorn Creek, and Rocky Ridge), the John Muir Land Trust has been tasked by property owner Charlene Harvey to help her fulfill a dream to preserve the location against development.

Harvey's husband, Jim, first bought the nearly 200-acre property and lived there in a small cabin before they met and married over 60 years ago. After their marriage they lived in San Francisco, but kept adding on to the structure at the ranch for their weekend getaways and eventual build-up of cattle.

"Jim always saw the ranch as a buffer between the very developed Bluffs and the very rural nature of Bollinger Canyon," said Harvey. "We al-

ways talked about how to do that and protect it, but he didn't really take that step in his lifetime."

After her husband passed away, Harvey continued to visit the ranch on weekends and in summers with her three generations of family, but none of them had plans to make it their primary residence, "so I began to think about how I could protect it from development."

Harvey decided on the 143-acre figure because she has a grandson who lives in one of the houses on the property and who helps manage the ranch, and she felt it important to have a buffer of land surrounding the houses and barn while making the rest available to the public.

With her decision to get the ball rolling, Harvey contacted JMLT through recommendations. "Everyone I asked had great things to say about them – how easy it was to work with them, and when I met Linus I felt I would have a real partner."

No stranger to launching land preservation campaigns, JMLT Executive Director Linus Eukel was happy to take up the mantle and fulfill Harvey's vision. The Save Harvey

Ranch Campaign is hoping to raise \$4 million by the Dec. 31, 2022 deadline. COVID mandates have thrown a wrench into the efforts, but have not deterred the full speed ahead mindset to make the Harvey family's dream a reality.

"The \$4 million goal covers our cost of acquiring Harvey Ranch," explained Eukel. "No two projects are the same. These costs include appraisals, surveys, natural resource assessment reports, title research, legal fees, staff time, and the actual purchase price for transferring title. It adds up quickly!"

What's at stake is the loss of 143 untouched acres of land; a gateway to over 15,000 acres of pristine wilderness; a new staging area with trailheads, and trail connections; convenient access to the entire Easy Bay; quick access to amazing views and pathways; an enhanced buffer for wildlife; a protected viewshed; and the preservation of land surrounding Saint Mary's College.

The Harvey Ranch will provide magnificent hiking trails to nature lovers of any age and ability. From short walks to miles of trails with varying terrain, there is

something to see and enjoy for everybody. Equestrians will even be allowed access to centuries-old ranch roads.

The ranch itself is a habitat for countless animals, reptiles and raptors. Making the area their domicile are gray foxes, deer, opossums, raccoons, jackrabbits, weasels, bobcats, mountain lions, Northern alligator lizards, gopher snakes, Western pond turtles, red-tailed and Cooper's hawks, golden eagles, great blue herons and great egrets, to name a few. Threatened and endangered species such as the Alameda whip-snake and the California red-legged frog also call Harvey Ranch home.

When asked what will happen to the 143 acres of Harvey Ranch if the \$4 million figure falls short, Eukel replied, "If we fall short, we will not be able to purchase any portion of the property. The residents of Lamorinda were extremely generous when JMLT raised funds for the successful acquisitions of Carr Ranch and Painted Rock. This community understands the value and importance of our conserved spaces. We are optimistic."

According to the JMLT campaign, "A few minutes spent in daily traffic on the once-rural roads of Lamorinda make it clear that the

area is booming. Population pressure grows as each new home is built and new traffic light is installed. Protecting Harvey Ranch is a rare opportunity to save a landscape that is universally recognized as a critical conservation milestone – a gem to be spared from bulldozer, concrete and asphalt."

"I just know how pleased Jim would be about this decision," stated Harvey. "He really was a true environmentalist, and to be able to protect this little part of the county and make it a gateway to the larger trail system would be exactly what he would have wanted. The family is also very pleased about this decision."

"The land trust has been great to work with," added Harvey. "As has Saint Mary's College, who has been a good neighbor for 50 years. I think this will be a win-win for everyone."

JMLT will host a virtual kickoff event on Feb. 3, along with public hikes in the spring and summer. To sign up for an e-newsletter or for more information visit: [jmlt.org](http://jmlt.org) or call (925) 228-5018. To make a donation to the Save Harvey Ranch Campaign contact JMLT Director of Development Melanie Hogan: [melanie@jmlt.org](mailto:melanie@jmlt.org).



## Love and algorithms, 'I'm Your Man' from Germany an intelligent, romantic sci-fi film



Photo provided

By Sophie Braccini

In a not too distant future, Alma, an anthropologist and research director, is compelled to enter an experiment in order to get research funding: she is to evaluate a robot, human-looking, whose behavior and intellect has been designed to be her perfect romantic partner. Alma, being a rational individual who is passionate about her research, is not enthralled by the prospect of living for three weeks with a robot and she enters the experiment claws out. As the movie develops, the relationship between woman and robot of course evolves, until the surprising ending. This touching and amusing German film, "I'm Your Man," opens in Orinda on Jan. 21.

Current dating apps already use algorithms to analyze people's preferences and find for them the best possible matches. The movie takes this a step further and imagines algorithms that create that very special person who will be "the one." Director Maria Schrader, who previously realized the Netflix series "Unorthodox," has created a sci-fi romantic story with humorous moments and emotional aspects as well. The very entertaining film is first a reflection on a society that, through algorithms, feeds us what we already like and entangles us in an endless loop populated with our previous choices.

The start of the movie is reminiscent of the film "Her," but has a very different and intriguing dynamic. Tom, the boy-next-door-adorable-robot, is played by British actor Dan

Stevens. He has been conceived to meet all of Alma's desires, both physically and intellectually. Stevens plays with a lot of self-irony the complexity of a robot that has been programmed to fit a role, but is also able to learn and improve. But why doesn't Alma fall for the perfect young man? Do we need a perfect match to fall in love? Is complete indulgence of all our dreams that appealing? Have we become so inept at facing the risks of failure that a safe-belief human is a better option?

... continued on Page B2



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# Super healthy Mediterranean charcuterie board just in time for the Super Bowl



**Mediterranean Appetizer Board**  
By Susie Iventosch

Photo Susie Iventosch

Charcuterie boards are all the rage lately, and with good reason ... they are beautiful, festive and delicious, with an assortment to please anyone's palate! I recently saw a board that was the size of a six-foot-long banquet table. That one was amazing and so inspirational. I decided to do a vegetarian board made from all of the sun-kissed flavors of the Mediterranean that could be lots of fun anytime, but with Super Bowl LVI coming up, there will be plenty of need for finger foods. We made the same naan that we recently featured, but made them into bite-sized rounds for dipping into hummus and creamy whipped feta, (which is not featured, because my board ran out of space). But, it is perfect for dipping the fresh cucumber roll ups into. If you get really ambitious, you can roll the cucumber around longer slices of red and yellow bell peppers, or salmon with cream cheese, or really anything that sounds tasty to you.

We stuffed the sweet

cherry peppers with Boursin Garlic and Fine Herbs cheese. To do this, we just piped the cheese into the pepper using a pastry bag, fitted with an open star decorating tip. This makes the job really easy and the finish looks professional. Be sure to let the cheese come to room temperature before you pipe it into the pepper.

We found a little trick to fit in more of the cucumber roll ups and that is to use a wine cork to hold them in place until it is filled up so they don't unravel. I kept putting them in and they kept unraveling, until I got wise to the old cork trick! If you roll them up around a creamy cheese you won't have this problem anyway.

The ingredients we featured in our board are listed below. The hummus, chimichurri, and whipped feta recipes are below. I am sure you will think of other items you'd like to include in your board, and especially depending up how big you want to make it. This one is a fairly small board, so I was a bit limited on space.

Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com). This recipe can be found on our website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://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>



## BOARD INGREDIENTS

Sweet & Spicy Sweet Piquante Peppers or pickled sweet cherry peppers, stuffed with Boursin cheese  
Whole pepperoncini  
Olive varieties: Castelvetro, Kalamata, Chalkadiki, Greek Mt. Athos  
Cubed Feta Cheese  
Chopped cherry Tomatoes  
Snipped Basil  
Marinated artichoke hearts  
Watermelon radishes, thinly sliced  
Guara or Marcona salted almonds  
Cucumber roll ups (thinly sliced on the mandoline slicer and rolled up tightly.)  
Cilantro-jalapeno hummus (recipe below)  
Chimichurri (recipe below)  
Whipped Feta (recipe below)  
Crackers  
Mini naan

## Cilantro-Jalapeño Hummus

(Makes about 1 1/2 cups)

### INGREDIENTS

1-2 jalapeños diced (depending upon your heat meter!)  
1 cup cilantro leaves, loosely packed  
1-2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 15.5-oz. can garbanzo beans (they come packed 14, 15, 15.5 or 16 oz. depending upon the manufacturers, and any of these are fine)  
1 tablespoon garbanzo bean brine or ice cold water  
2 tablespoon tahini  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
Juice of 1 lime  
1/2 teaspoon salt

### DIRECTIONS

Drain garbanzo beans, but reserve the packing brine to use in the hummus. Set aside about 15 garbanzo beans for garnish.

Remove stem, ribs and seeds from the jalapeños, and coarsely dice. Place diced jalapeños in the bowl of your food processor. Process until finely chopped.

Add cilantro leaves and process until smooth. Mince garlic into this mixture and continue to process.

Add garbanzo beans along with 1 tablespoon of the brine (or ice-cold water) and purée until smooth.

Add 2 tablespoons tahini, lime juice, olive oil, and salt and puree until smooth. If the hummus is too thick, add a little more of the brine, (or cold water), 1 tablespoon at a time until desired consistency. We found that 1 tablespoon was perfect, but each can of garbanzo beans can vary in both size and moisture content.

To serve, garnish with fried garbanzo beans or chimichurri, (recipe just below), thinly sliced jalapeño, lime wedges, a sprig of cilantro and drizzle extra olive oil over the top.

## Fried Garbanzo Beans for Garnish

Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet. Add garbanzo beans and sauté over medium heat until crispy. Season with a dash of sea salt.

## Chimichurri

(Makes 1/2 cup)

### INGREDIENTS

2 jalapeños or Fresno chilis, stems, veins and seeds removed and coarsely chopped  
1/2 bunch cilantro leaves (or about 1 1/2 cups loosely packed)  
1/2 bunch Italian parsley (or about 1 1/2 cups loosely packed)  
2 tablespoons fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon dried oregano  
2 cloves garlic  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1/4 cup olive oil  
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

### DIRECTIONS

Put peppers, garlic, cilantro, parsley and oregano in the food processor and pulse until it reaches the texture you like. Some like it quite chunky and others like it puréed smooth. Either way, once it's chopped, transfer the veggies and herbs to a bowl and add the remaining ingredients. Use right away or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator until ready to use.

## Whipped Feta

(Makes about 1 cup)

1/2 cup feta crumbled  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice  
1/2 cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt

Place feta and olive oil in the bowl of your food processor and process until the feta cheese is smooth. Add lemon juice and yogurt and continue to process just until integrated and light and fluffy. Chill until ready to serve.

# Did you visit older parents during the holidays?

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC

Many people visited Mom and Dad this holiday season: a first visit in almost two years. What you observed might have been concerning and now you're back home and wonder "What support is appropriate and how do I find it for them?"

Some might have noticed during the pandemic via phone or video calls: (A) the repeating of stories, (B) denial of any needs, (C) what you think might be false reporting of important information. The Alzheimer's Association says that over the pandemic there has been a 16% increase in the number of persons diagnosed.

What should families do if they walk into what is often described as a "hornets' nest?" I hope you held off on giving advice too soon. This is something that, in order to be successful, needs to be addressed

more slowly. Overreacting leads to resistance. If you respond with "you should" or are overly parental, telling your parent what to do, you seldom get cooperation.

The pandemic has been hard on solo seniors: those living alone and those who were in assisted living these past two years. These situations increased both depression and dementia.

Knowing how to have a conversation with your parents about the "What if's of a longer life" can be productive if you (1) didn't do it on the day of a celebration and (2) you have prepared them ahead of time for the conversation.

Many older adults welcome these discussions because, once they have discussed all the "What if's" scenarios of growing older and discussed their values and wants with family, it can relieve some unexpressed stress or worry. Then you can become the resource collector and, in the end, it will give

you a sense of doing what is right when you are called to assist in making medical decisions or in choosing a retirement community.

If you saw memory decline, personal care that is neglected, unpaid bills, and more clutter, you might be looking at a safety issue as well. This is when you will need to take action sooner to ensure that your parents are not in any jeopardy. That will require legal documents like the Advance Health Care Directives as well as some local professional guidance.

Families often think that a senior living community is the only answer and sometimes it can be the best solution. However, over 80% of seniors want to stay in their own homes till the end of life. It is important to first try the local support systems that support aging in place – such as the [www.LamorindaVillage.org](http://www.LamorindaVillage.org). And, if your parents are at a distance, already resistant and you are worried about safety, I think consulting with a Pro-

fessional Geriatric Care Manager would be a great help in designing a plan with all the local options for in-home or retirement living. You can find that professional at [www.AgingLifeCare.org](http://www.AgingLifeCare.org). Look for a professional with a license and certifications.

I teach a series of four free Zoom classes for those concerned about someone with a dementia. They are usually on the second Friday at 11 a.m., but the February class will be on the 18th. You can sign up on my website [www.LindaFodriniJohnson.com](http://www.LindaFodriniJohnson.com). On Zoom, I also co-lead a support group for those caring for someone with a dementia. This is twice a month through LOPC in Lafayette. Send me an email if you would like to join. It is the first and third Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. My email is [LindaFJ620@outlook.com](mailto:LindaFJ620@outlook.com)

The big message is that you are not alone and having professional guidance and support can make this life journey less stressful for

everyone in the family.



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management since 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989. Eldercare Services is now a division of Home Care Assistance and continues to provide Bay Area families with care management, advocacy, counseling, support groups and education.

# Love and algorithms, 'I'm Your Man' from Germany an intelligent, romantic sci-fi film

... continued from Page B1

Maren Eggert portrays Alma as a rigid middle-aged woman who is intellectually very strong and powerful but also has hidden frailties. Her fight between what her intel-

ligence and her reason tells her and what her emotional weakness leads her to do is touching and so well depicted. Overall, it is the dangers of the seductive facilities and shortcuts given to us by technology that Schrader illustrates so

well here. In an interview for the Berlin Film Festival where "Ich bin Dein Mensch" ("I'm Your Man") was presented, the director said that what attracted her in the short story by Emma Braslavsky that serves as the base of this

movie, are the unanswered questions the story raises.

Besides the crafty story and excellent acting, the attraction of the movie comes also from the slightly sci-fi esthetics created by the well-mastered cinematogra-

phy. The film will be presented for a least a week at the Orinda Theater by the International Film Showcase starting on Jan. 21. Tickets at [orindamovies.com](http://orindamovies.com)

## BVE 4th and 5th graders AIM high to raise money for Afghan refugees



Photo provided

**Submitted by Cathy Martinsen**

After a hiatus due to COVID, Burton Valley Elementary's AIM class brought back its annual community service project, the Book Bonanza, and had its most successful year ever! The long-standing tradition put on by Ms. Martinsen's fourth- and fifth-graders is a huge undertaking. The students collect, price, and, of course, sell books ... at incredibly low prices (some books are as cheap as 25 cents). All proceeds go to a charitable cause, and this year the students chose to donate the monies to help the Afghan refugees.

Jewish Family & Community Services of the East Bay is leading the Afghan Refugee Resettlement program in the Bay Area, and they are in great need of supplies and money to help these people make a new home here. The whole class banded together to complete each step in the process, and after three weeks of collecting and pricing, the sale was on. Classes from

Burton Valley came to support the AIM class by buying books, homemade rainbow loom bracelets, bookmarks, and origami, and dropping in donations to the donation jar. After the four-day frenzy, the students counted their money and were thrilled to find they had made \$2554.34 ... the most ever raised!

The students were proud to present a check to Ami Dodson of JFCS the week before winter break. There were still many books left and several boxes were donated to the Contra Costa WIC program, while the bulk (917 books) went to the East Bay Children's Book Project. So many benefited from the Book Bonanza this year, and it was a rewarding experience for the class.

"It felt great knowing that we helped other people," agreed the enthusiastic students. Ms. Martinsen's class appreciates the support of the Burton Valley community for all the book donations as well as the subsequent purchases. It truly is a school-wide effort.

## Campo girls basketball team surpasses goal, collects 1,600 shoes for Soles4Souls



Photo provided

**Submitted by Diana Jackin**

More than a thousand pairs of shoes will be distributed overseas to help those in need thanks to a shoe drive by the Campolindo High School girls' basketball team and sponsored by realtor Jon Wood of Compass, a national real estate technology company. Surpassing their goal of 500 pairs of shoes, the girls collected over 1,600 pairs for Soles4Souls, a nonprofit that turns unwanted shoes into opportunity by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use.

Soles4Souls distributes shoes to underprivileged people worldwide and also fights poverty by distributing them to local micro-entrepreneurs, who can resell them to earn a living for their families.

"It was incredible to witness the town of Moraga, the community I grew up in, show up in a powerful way to support these young women

and Soles4Souls," said Wood. "I am sincerely proud to be a part of this effort!"

The 1,600 pairs of shoes collected by the girls' basketball team filled 60 boxes and three trucks. The donations also removed 2,000 pounds of textiles from landfills and eliminated 48,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions.

"The girls showed leadership, teamwork, and compassion for those in need," said Bill Flitter, coach of the Campolindo High School girls' basketball team. "We appreciate all of their hard work and look forward to the next community give-back event."

"It was amazing to witness the passion and courage of the team during the difficult times we live in," added Wood. "Under the leadership of the coach and his amazing wife, they gave in a deep and meaningful way which makes this holiday season even more special. I was so proud to be able to support their incredible efforts and results."

**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](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) with the subject header In Service to the Community.

**Submit stories and story ideas to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com)**

## Campolindo Leos and Moraga Lions donate to MEF



Photo provided

**From left: Leo secretary Natalie Barkey, Leo president Luca Rago, Campolindo principal John Walker and Lion Dana Glasgow**

**Submitted by Bob Murtagh**

During 2021 the Campolindo Leo Club and Moraga Lions Club were successful in conducting several fundraisers in spite of the COVID virus. On Dec. 16, 2021 both clubs met with Campolindo High School Principal John Walker and presented him with a check payable to

the Moraga Education Foundation for \$500. This is the 17th year that both Service Clubs have supported the Moraga schools. The next fundraising activity for Leos and Lions will be the annual Crab Feed to be held on Jan. 22. (Drive thru only due to COVID.) For more information about the Leos, Lions or the crab feed contact Lion Bob Murtagh - [bobmurtagh@gmail.com](mailto:bobmurtagh@gmail.com).

## Campolindo Interact Club service project benefits foster children at Alternative Family Services in Oakland



Photo provided

**Submitted by Rich Render**

During the winter break, the Campolindo High School Interact Club facilitated a community service project for those in need, where they filled three dozen holiday decorated mason jars with small toys and candy. The jars were then donated to the foster children at Alternative Family Services in Oakland, California, as a child's gift for the holiday.

The Campolindo students that partook in the event, helping to decorate and fill the jars, were Wiley Winkler, Sara Tabibian, Anna Rossi, Mari Testa, and Jessica Finnerty. Interact is an international community service organization for high school students, and is part of Rotary International. There are almost 15,000 Interact Clubs around the world, and the Campolindo Interact Club is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Moraga.

### 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](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com), and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.

## Not to be missed

### ART

**January featured Artists** at the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library: Digital News Art, The Beauty of Birds and Intricate Botanical Watercolors; George, Maggie and Sara Boscoe. This exhibit runs through Jan. 31 during normal Library hours in the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library at 26 Orinda Way. Hours are Mon. – Thur., 10 a.m. – 8 p.m., Fri. – Sat., 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., closed Sun. Please visit us online at <https://lamorindaarts.org/current-exhibits/>

**The Moraga Art Gallery** announces the opening of a spirited new show, "Singularities," a title derived from the unique visions of the show featured member artists: Orinda's Linh Kang and Walnut Creek's Susan Erickson. Feb. 2 to April 10, also consists of paintings, etchings, prints, ceramics, jewelry, woodworking, glasswork and photographs by the gallery's other members and additional guest artists. 432 Center Street in Moraga's Rheem Shopping Center, open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. [www.moragaartgallery.com](http://www.moragaartgallery.com), or call 925-376-5407.

**Valley Art Gallery announces** "Wintermission," our show between shows, featuring selected works by Gallery

Artists designed to refresh and warm even the longest, darkest winter days. Reflecting a wide range of styles, prices, motifs and media, the show continues our 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. 1661 Botelho Drive, Suite 110, Walnut Creek, [www.valleyartgallery.org](http://www.valleyartgallery.org); (925) 935-4311.

**Start the New Year by viewing** the Lamorinda Arts Alliance exhibit, "New Beginnings" at the aRt Cottage in Concord, open Jan. 5 – Feb. 25. Please come meet the artists at the reception on Saturday, Jan. 8 from 2-4 p.m. The gallery, located at 2238 Mt. Diablo Street, Concord, is open, Tuesday-Friday 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday 1 a.m.-5 p.m. <https://laa4art.org>.

**Art show at Orinda Books.** January features the paintings of Lisa Gunn. Lisa has a long artistic presence in Orinda. Her style is a "California Impressionism" involving plein air, landscapes, and abstracts. She notes, "I am hoping that people will connect with my painting and find some attachment that speaks to them whether it be through color, composition or some thread of energy transmitting from one human to another."

[www.orindabooks.com](http://www.orindabooks.com). 276 Village Square, Orinda, 925-254-7606.

### MUSIC

**St. Paul's Concert Series** is excited to present Harpsichordist Arthur Omura in a solo performance live from St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 29. This live performance will be broadcast online or in-person as permitted at the time of the performance. To register for tickets and receive the live link, and to check on in-person attendance status, visit [www.stpaulswc.org/concert-series](http://www.stpaulswc.org/concert-series). 1924 Trinity Avenue, Walnut Creek. Optional Donation upon ticketing/registration: average \$20, Students \$10 (all are welcome regardless of donation).

### LITERATURE

**February events at Orinda Books**, 276 Village Square, Orinda: Thursday, Feb. 3 at 11 a.m. Pat's Book Club will read and discuss via Zoom "We Run The Tides" by Vendela Vida. Sign up at [info@orindabooks.com](mailto:info@orindabooks.com) or call 925-254-7606 for the Zoom link.

### THEATER

**"Cinderella's Wedding"** performs at the Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive in

Walnut Creek. Performances are: Friday, Feb. 11 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 12 at 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m. Single tickets are on sale (\$25 - \$52) with senior and youth pricing available. Diablo Ballet will also present a virtual option, which will be a recording of the live performance, streaming Feb. 18 – 27 and available for viewing at any time during this timeframe. Price \$37 per household. For in theatre or virtual tickets, call 925-943-SHOW (7469) or visit [www.lesherartscenter.org](http://www.lesherartscenter.org) or [www.diabloballet.org](http://www.diabloballet.org). For a link to the Leshar Center for the Arts safety protocols that are currently in place, please visit: [www.lesherartscenter.org](http://www.lesherartscenter.org).

### OTHER

**Threats to our precious public lands** focus of Green Sofa Cinema Series event. Powerful forces want to grab our public lands for oil and gas drilling, mining, logging and development—a potential American tragedy. Learn more Wed., Jan. 19, 7 to 8 p.m., when Green Sofa Cinema Series hosts a discussion of the film "Public Trust—The Fight for America's Public Lands" (watch in advance on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3kBu2dC>) and hear from county Urban Limit Line defender Gretchen Logue. Register now for the free Zoom event: <https://bit.ly/3Hf5Qay>

## Not to be missed

**AAUW-OML is sponsoring** two Girls4STEM webinars for high school girls. "Why Studying Materials Science is Like Playing Tetris" presented by Maritza Sanchez, PhD Candidate, Materials Science and Engineering, will be held on Sunday, Feb. 6 at 4 p.m. Sheryl Mordo, P.E., B.S., Civil Engineering from UC Davis, will talk about her career path from math classes in high school to a career as a construction project engineer and manager at Intuit, one of the world's largest business software companies, with an internship at DisneyWorld along the way. Her webinar is on Sunday, March 6 at 4 p.m. Get more information at <https://oml-ca.aauw.net/girls4stem-webinars/>

### GARDEN

**The Montelindo Garden Club**, membership open to all, presents landscape designer Katie Creighton talking about Early Bloomers — the Harbingers of Spring, Feb. 18, email [montelindogarden@aol.com](mailto:montelindogarden@aol.com) to learn if the meeting is via Zoom and to request a link. For further information, including times and in-person location, see the website at [montelindogarden.com](http://montelindogarden.com). Programs are free and open to the public. Masks and proof of vaccination, including booster, are required for in-person events. 10 a.m. via Zoom; 9 a.m. if in person at the Lafayette Library, 3491 Mt Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

Please submit events to: [calendar@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:calendar@lamorindaweekly.com)

## Lamorinda Weekly

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# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Lamorinda girls' soccer – positives on the pitch



Tatum Zuber - Acalanes

**By Jon Kingdon**

Despite having to play outdoors in inclement weather, there were no complaints coming from any of the Lamorinda soccer teams. "With the short season last spring, everyone was looking forward to a normal season, even with the rain and cold," Miramonte head coach Barry McQuain said. "That's girls' soccer."

**Acalanes**

As the second anniversary of Acalanes winning the Northern California Regional Championship approaches, the Dons look to be in good position to defend that honor after a season where there were no playoffs. With a 6-1 record and having outscored their opponents by a combined 37-5, their main concern might be one of overconfidence.

This is a team with both youth and experience comprised of 15 seniors and juniors and nine sophomores and freshmen. "We have a

really good mix of players," coach Nick Barbarino said. "It reminds me of our team two years ago when we had a similar mix of players."



Addie Bailey, Jacque Peacock, Taylor Mikalis, Nicole Nguyen

Photos Acalanes Boosters

The three captains on the team, Addie Bailey, Tatum Zuber and Chloe Quintella, were freshmen on that championship team along with juniors Jacque Peacock, Camryn Salazar, and Taylor Carlin.

The upperclassmen have utilized their playoff experience to create a winning environment, Barbarino said: "The leadership and composure of this group makes it feel like a team that has been there. They understand the high-pressure situations and how to get through them."

The offense is led by Bailey, Zuber and Natalie Means.

Means was just activated, scoring two goals in her first game, and will be playing for Georgetown next year. Freshmen Taylor Mikalis (5 goals) and Nicole Nguyen and sophomore Ella Thomason are among the girls that have scored at least one goal.

Barbarino has never been afraid to throw freshmen into the mix. "It's like life," Barbarino said. "If you can contribute, it doesn't matter what age or grade you're in. We're going to put the best players on the field. We are really deep this year. The freshmen are learning and improving, and it really helps that the upperclassmen are helping them to acclimate and get up to speed."

The Dons are only giving up 0.66 goals/game. Junior Catherine Judson, starting for her second year, has been very solid in the net along with freshman backup Melisa Adatepe. "Catherine has gotten a lot better with her passing and position and is much more comfortable in the net," Barbarino said. "She is great at reading the ball in the air and has very quick reactions. We're also excited about Melisa's future."

The line protecting Judson is led by Quintella and Peacock. "Chloe and Jacque, our center backs, have both been great all year," Barbarino said.

... continued on Page C3

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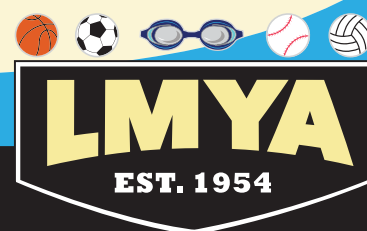


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# Local Karate athletes at Las Vegas International Karate Competition



Photo provided

Karate athletes from the Lamorinda area, from left: Andrew Cai, Miles Paras, Ryoma Durkee, Paroma Khan, Chloe Paras, Parsa Shayesteh, Sophia Hong, Alex Paras, Polly Ryzhenkova; not pictured: Rayan Sohrabian

## Submitted by Thomas Westernoff

A total of 10 Karate & Fitness USA Team Members of Lafayette returned home from the USA Open Karate Championships held in Las Vegas on Dec. 15 - 19 with over 30 medals. Ten

athletes competed in Kata (Forms) and Kumite (Sparring). The USA Open Karate Event is sanctioned by USA Karate which is a member of the United States Olympic Committee. Karate is an official Olympic sport and the sport continues to grow around the world for boys and girls.

# Local 8th graders win Adrenaline Challenge Lacrosse Tournament



Photo provided

## Submitted by Tim Jones

This month, Derek Youn, Tucker Jones and Donovan Bantique of Lamorinda, while playing with Alcatraz Outlaws,

won the Adrenaline Challenge Cup in Del Mar, Calif.

This is the third lacrosse tournament these boys have won with Alcatraz Outlaws.

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# Lamorinda boys' soccer leading in competitive Diablo League



50 - Alejandro Canales. 17 - Mason Fish



Photos Liza Marie Narido

17-Luke Olsen, 10 - Rhett Skvarna. 16 - Jack Alcalay

## By Jon Kingdom

Unlike the basketball teams that are at their busiest over the Christmas holiday and New Year's, playing in the various tournaments during that period, the soccer teams make it a point to avoid playing games at that time. "Our philosophy is to not put any additional pressure on our players," Acalanes head coach Paul Curtis said. "When you schedule games during the school breaks, it's a time many of the families want to do things such as visiting relatives and traveling. Restricting the kids during this period is totally unfair to them, so we don't do that."

### Acalanes

With a 7-2-1 record, the winter break did the Dons no harm. With 20 juniors and seniors on the roster, there are too many leaders to mention. The co-captains on the team are midfielders Rhett Skvarna, Matt Walner, and defender Jacob Hill.

"Rhett has not played yet due to off-season knee surgery," Curtis said. "Regardless, he's been a strong leader and will be a four-year letterman. Matt, also a four-year varsity player is the hardest worker on the team. He has found his voice and has matured into what we thought he would be when he came in as a freshman. Jacob is the voice of the team and has a lot of character. He has a wonderful personality, is extremely resilient and is a natural born leader."

Junior Dylan Olson and sophomore Jake Boselli are splitting time in the goal and together are giving up less than one goal a game with a combined six shutouts. "Both of them are winners and extremely athletic," Curtis said. "They know what winning looks and feels like and are very good communicators."

The list of defenders goes seven deep led by Daniel Adri

and Mason Fish. "They are our primary center backs with great depth behind them," Curtis said.

There are two freshmen that have contributed immediately, defender Eitan Romick and striker Jonathan Roth (younger brother of midfielder Eli Roth). "Both of them are playing well," Curtis said. "Eitan is a good defender that has seen a lot of playing time and is coming along nicely. Jonathan is dangerous playing on the outside mid-field. Both he and Eli are great attackers."

There is still room for improvement, according to Curtis: "The team is developing as to who they are. We're split between the seniors and the rest of the team which in my mind is an ideal situation because we have the older kids teaching the underclassmen about the program and why we do things the way that we do and that just helps to maintain the integrity of the program."

### Miramonte

Defense has been the name of the game for the 4-0-1 Matadors. Though they have only scored seven goals, they have only given up one goal, 0.2 goals/game. The domination on defense begins with goalie Grant Scanlan.

"Grant has been amazing in goal for us as he was last year," head coach Masood Ahmadi said. "He's a great shot stopper with great size and confidence. He also has good feet which allows us to use him as another field player in the games."

The back line is very talented led by seniors captain Henry Hill, center back Miles Ownes and the brother duo of Graham Ballantyne (Jr) and Brant Ballantyne (soph). "Henry has been a great leader on and off the field. His confidence on the ball along with Miles allows us to maintain possession through the matches and play our style of soccer. Graham and Brant

both can play fullback and are great defenders but can also get up the field and be an attacking threat, to either score or give assists as wingers. Brant has also taken on a leadership role as one of the younger players on the team with both his play and being vocal at trainings and games. Sophomores new to the team, Aiden Rascher and James MacKenzie, have both done a good job at fullback/outside defenders as well."

The goals and assists among the players have been spread throughout the team. The midfielders are a solid group with Jonas Dao (Sr), Nick Govea (Jr) and Riley Coover. "Jonas is calm, cool and collected but will surprise with his flair and speed," Ahmadi said. "Nick transitioned from center back/fullback to midfielder and winger. His technical ability has allowed us to use him more on offense this year. Riley is our holding midfielder. He is intelligent with the ball and knows how to win tackles in the midfield. He is as important to our defense as he is in keeping the ball for our offense."

There have been some pleasant surprises for Ahmadi with senior center forward Ethan Haines, after playing three years for the JV team and Noah Rabinovitz and Eli Leal-Schuma. "Ethan has been solid filling in at center forward and I'm looking forward to seeing Noah and Eli get solid minutes and experience at this level and thrive."

Optimism abounds for Ahmadi at the potential for the team: "The possibilities are endless for this group. If they continue to trust in one another and believe in how we want to play, we'll have a great year. We just need to stay patient with the process and not get ahead of ourselves, by focusing on one game at a time, which will be a key factor. Staying healthy will help as well." **Campolindo**

It's a homecoming for Campolindo's first year head coach Stefan Clemens. Having graduated from Campolindo in 2004, Clemens was a four-year letterman for the soccer team, going on to play at UC Santa Cruz. He brings a great deal of experience having coached at the Lamorinda Soccer Club, Cal State East Bay, Los Positas J.C., and the University of California.

Clemens bases his philosophy on TOVO (total football in Dutch) which seeks to define the characteristics of ideal football and a set of prescriptive techniques for player development.

For Clemens, "It's all about soccer IQ and understanding your spacing with your teammates and opponents off the ball so that when you get the ball, your decision making is at a very high level."

Despite coming in late as the team's coach this year, Clemens has come to appreciate the quality of his team. "I have a really good group of players. They are passionate and they don't give up, being able to problem solve in mid-game. They have been positive and responsive and have enjoyed the training and intensity that I have brought to the training and games. I had an individual meeting with every player, and I've received a lot of positive feedback."

The offense is led by senior captain, center mid Will Ruskin, junior captain, center mid Luke Olsen and senior midfielder Nauder Maghsoodnia. "They all bring a lot to the team in skill and talent. Will is a major standout as our leading scorer and assist man," Clemens said. "He is very technical and an extremely smart player. Luke is very technical and smart and is a good distributor and Nauder is also very smart, making good decisions. He is dangerous with the ball and does great in maintaining contact."

The goalie position is split between freshman Luc Narido and junior Ryan Sintchak. Narido generally starts the game and Sintchak takes over in the second half. "Luc is very technical, good with his feet, passing and is a good shot blocker," Clemens said. "He's tall and strong and age doesn't matter to me as long as someone show competency. Ryan is very good at closing games for us with his leadership and vocal skills."

The defensive backs are led by a senior Aiden Paul and a freshman Sean Mungunshagai. "I coached Aiden in club," Clemens said. "He is big, strong, good in the air and as a one-on-one defender. Sean has not missed a minute. He is our anchor in IQ and patience, calming the team down. He has good height and is so good with his feet and decision-making. He is a distributor that gives us more space in his passing."

The other defensive backs are right back Douglas Ellery and Mason Fara. "Doug is strong with a good long ball to initiate attacks. He is a gritty player that will block shots with his chest and his face. He is a full game player that never gives up. Mason is a lightning bolt that is the fastest player in the league. We would be lost without him because he is a good cover defender and is able to clean up mistakes."

The one area that Clemens is looking for the team to improve is in finishing. "Our first two-thirds of the field are very good in possessions and positional play," Clemens said. "We need to improve on crossing and finishing, sending in a dangerous cross, putting pressure on the goalkeeper and giving us the opportunity to deflect it into the goal. We're looking to score two or more goals in a game and getting higher up the field, occupying more dangerous spaces."

# Lamorinda girls' soccer – positives on the pitch

... continued from Page C1

"We are really deep on this line with Sammy Hess (Sr), Taylor Carlin (Jr), Avery Ives (Soph) and Demi Woods (Fr)."

With the early season success, Barbarino does not want the team to get overconfident: "We never want to get complacent. The girls know what I expect of them, and they also hold each other accountable. We're working on positivity and understanding that not everything will be positive and how do we turn negative situations into positives. It's just about creating an environment where they have fun."

### Campolindo

After eight games, Campolindo remains undefeated with a record of 5-0-3. The frustration at having only an abbreviated season last spring, has only served to motivate the team. "After last season without playoffs, we came into this year ready to jump into competition," head coach Luis Pinto said. "We were eager and prepared with a lot of good players. We have 12 returners, so it's been looking really good."

With 16 seniors and juniors on the team, there is no lack of experience. Heading the offense are senior twin sisters, Mia and Ella Colombini, both of whom will be playing for UC Irvine next year. "They were key players last year and are co-captains this year and are our leading scorers," Pinto said. "They do a great job supporting each other with both lining up as attacking midfielders. Mylie Jaquet, a freshman, is also a player that has made a big impact on the team. She was shy but feisty and has made a big difference blending in very quickly with the team. Senior co-captain center back, Sami Kolin (who will be playing for Cal State Northridge next year) has been a great passer so that when she wins the ball, she has the freedom to drive up and set up her teammates."

The defense has only given up 14 goals and is led by senior goalie Marissa Karver and her backup junior Anna Mooradian. "Marissa has been on the team since her freshman year, and this is her first year as a starter. She is very

humble and a hard worker," Pinto said. "She is a great communicator with the back line. She is very competitive and can be hard on herself. Ana has been getting some playing time which will help her next season." Besides Kolin, seniors Ainsley Murphy and Marion Berzansky have been solid on defense as well.

Pinto's key to be successful the rest of the season? "We need to stay humble, keep working hard, respecting our opponents and always pointing towards the next game."

### Miramonte

The Matadors are also a very mature team with 16 juniors and seniors out of the 23 players on the roster. With 12 of the players having at least one goal or one assist, it's a number that McQuaid appreciates: "I want as many different players scoring or assisting."

Co-captains Julia Hunt and Avery Welch lead the offense. Two freshmen, Olivia Penney and Katrina White, are lining up as both strikers and wings and have contributed immediately. "They

have good speed, ball control and the talent to play," McQuaid said. "Olivia has some wonderful assists playing out on the wing with some great crosses. Katrina plays more of a striker role, playing with her back to the goal and it's great to see her being able to play that way."

Co-captain and goalie Rowan Blacklock has been a leader on defense. "Rowan is a solid player in the net," McQuaid said. "She guides the defense well and has a lot of experience and skills. She sees the plays very nicely and positions herself well and she is not afraid to get physical. She has a commanding presence and we're confident when we have her in the goal."


There is a lot of talent lining up in front of Blacklock led by juniors Tahra Minowada, Addie Cresson and Ellie Foster. "Tahra anchors the defense in the middle," McQuaid said. "Cresson will play the left and right side and is one of our strongest defenders in transition from defense to offense. She has great speed and can dribble without looking at the ball, so

she is really able to see the field, complimenting Tahra nicely. Ellie has also been doing a great job." There is also great depth on defense led by Shauna Lindheim, Izzie Mobley, Sophia Swenson, and Caitlyn Jenkins.

Co-captain Avery Welch, junior Jada Deitrick and sophomores Zoey Rossiter and Asthon Laczkowski lead the midfielders. "The four of them are able to run like crazy," McQuaid said. "They are really strong players and are aggressive on offense and defense."

Though they have started slowly (3-5-1), McQuaid is taking a long-term perspective on the team: "The players are still learning to anticipate what their teammates are doing and that will come with playing together. The girls all get along and like playing with each other. Playing late in February as opposed to early December is just a huge difference. We have a very skilled group of girls and hope that our record will show that as the season develops."


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# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 15 Issue 24 Wednesday, January 19, 2022



The Real Estate Year in Review

read on Page D4

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

### Houseplant housemates



Photo Cynthia Brian

Maintain consistent moisture with anthuriums and prayer plants

By Cynthia Brian

*“Having plants in your house is a natural way to continuously clear yourself!” ~ Doreen Virtue*

Forty-five! That’s the number of houseplants that filled my tiny dorm room on the seventh floor of Hedrick Hall during my freshman year at UCLA. Every shelf, box, windowsill, wall hook, desk, and floor space were filled with a container sprouting something green. I had gone from being surrounded by nature on the farm to living in a high rise in the concrete jungle. My body, mind, and spirit craved a garden. I created an indoor oasis of easy-care houseplants that helped me breathe better in those days when Los Angeles was clogged with smog.

Eighteen! That’s the number of potted plants that currently grace my indoor space. The number doubles if you count containers on my

porch and balcony. Most of my family of plants have been with me for decades. I have a fiddleleaf fig that began as a small specimen in a one-gallon pot that now towers to 15 feet in my hall. A precious peace lily that was gifted to me when “Chicken Soup for the Gardener’s Soul” hit the New York Times bestseller list currently inhabits a nine-square-foot corner of my family room. An original four-inch size variegated bromeliad birthed pups and is a focal flora in my living room. My lucky bamboo growing in water peppered with pebbles soars three feet or more.

With winter keeping us from digging outside, indoor plants offer a way to garden in inclement weather while adding beauty to your interior décor. Even better than the attractiveness that plants bring to our designs, they are air-filtering workhorses as well. Air quality has become a big buzzword during the COVID pandemic. Through the process of photosynthesis, plants convert the carbon dioxide we exhale and also remove gases from the air through a process called absorption. Back in 1989, a NASA report concluded that household plants could provide a “promising economical solution to indoor air pollution.” A 2020 study published in the Journal of Environmental Management indicated that it would take a green wall to improve the health index of an interior environment. No matter which is truer, one thing is certain, being in nature as well as being surrounded by houseplants lowers our blood pressure, reduces stress, and improves mental health.

Numerous specimens make excellent houseplants. A few of my favorites include orchids, bromeliads, aloe, peace lily, snake plant, spider plant, pothos, dracaena, croton, fiddleleaf fig, dieffenbachia, anthurium, parlor palm, arrowhead plant, and lucky bamboo. All of these are very easy to maintain, offer gorgeous greenery, and can live for years with minimal proper care.

To grow healthy, happy plants that will provide endless enjoyment and attractiveness, these elements are necessary.

1. Provide the correct amount of light. Before you purchase any houseplant, look around your home for your light conditions. Some plants need bright light in a south window, others prefer the low light of a north-facing window. Some like it hot, some like it cool. Do your homework.

2. Water cautiously. Many houseplants drown from over-watering. The lucky bamboo is one rare specimen that thrives in water. Make sure that you have adequate drainage in all containers.

... continued on Page D10



### LAFAYETTE - Off Market

#### New Construction in Happy Valley - PENDING

4BD | 4.5BA | Office | Guest House | .90 AC | 3CAR

We are excited to report that this year is looking like it will be another strong one for the Lamorinda real estate market.

Our new construction listing has just gone pending. Main house approximately 5,300 sq. ft., separate guest house approximately 763 sq.ft. with a spectacular view; just under an acre, mostly flat.

We look forward to helping you with your real estate needs this year. Please call or email us for a confidential interview.



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## Lamorinda home sales recorded

City	Last reported	Lowest amount	Highest amount
LAFAYETTE	16	\$900,000	\$4,795,000
MORAGA	10	\$620,000	\$2,550,000
ORINDA	14	\$488,000	\$4,400,000

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

- 3557 Boyer Circle, \$1,365,000, 4 Bdrms, 2488 SqFt, 1932 YrBlt, 11-29-21
- 55 Cricket Hill Road, \$3,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 2644 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 12-03-21
- 124 Del Centro Court, \$1,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 1874 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 12-01-21
- 1042 El Curtola Boulevard, \$1,550,000, 3 Bdrms, 2285 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 12-01-21
- 3214 Gold Court, \$2,500,000, 5 Bdrms, 3329 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 12-03-21,  
Previous Sale: \$465,000, 03-01-88
- 1026 Hoedel Court, \$4,100,000, 5 Bdrms, 3913 SqFt, 2017 YrBlt, 11-30-21,  
Previous Sale: \$900,000, 07-27-17
- 1102 Orchard Road, \$2,280,000, 4 Bdrms, 2852 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 12-09-21,  
Previous Sale: \$1,010,000, 05-14-04
- 1129 Palomares Court, \$1,420,000, 4 Bdrms, 1647 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 11-30-21,  
Previous Sale: \$634,000, 07-11-03
- 3977 South Peardale Drive, \$3,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 3580 SqFt,  
2012 YrBlt, 12-03-21, Previous Sale: \$2,617,000, 08-05-19
- 1570 Rancho Del Hambre, \$3,190,000, 4 Bdrms, 4865 SqFt,  
1990 YrBlt, 11-29-21, Previous Sale: \$1,075,000, 07-01-92
- 833 Topper Lane, \$3,215,000, 4 Bdrms, 2648 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 12-01-21

### MORAGA

- 126 Ascot Court #C, \$434,000, 1 Bdrms, 858 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 12-07-21,  
Previous Sale: \$280,000, 06-18-15
- 90 Greenfield Drive, \$1,725,000, 3 Bdrms, 1786 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 12-06-21,  
Previous Sale: \$900,000, 03-03-15
- 1 Hastings Court, \$2,900,000, 4 Bdrms, 3620 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 11-29-21,  
Previous Sale: \$1,750,000, 01-31-13
- 50 Merrill Circle, \$2,550,000, 4 Bdrms, 4219 SqFt, 1992 YrBlt, 11-29-21,  
Previous Sale: \$2,200,000, 09-18-15
- 40 Merrill Circle, \$2,025,000, 3 Bdrms, 2946 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 12-03-21,  
Previous Sale: \$1,250,000, 08-06-16
- 1133 Rimer Drive, \$1,700,000, 3 Bdrms, 2220 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 11-29-21,  
Previous Sale: \$349,000, 08-01-88
- 1032 Sanders Drive, \$912,500, 3 Bdrms, 1454 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 11-30-21,  
Previous Sale: \$640,000, 04-16-02
- 65 Sullivan Drive, \$1,819,000, 4 Bdrms, 2308 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 12-03-21
- 63 Vista Encinos, \$2,345,000, 4 Bdrms, 3233 SqFt, 2020 YrBlt, 12-06-21

### ORINDA

- 8 Avis Court, \$2,101,500, 4 Bdrms, 2399 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 11-29-21
- 73 Brookwood Road #13, \$700,000, 2 Bdrms, 1020 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 12-06-21,  
Previous Sale: \$330,000, 08-12-03
- 125 Canon Drive, \$1,350,000, 4 Bdrms, 2680 SqFt, 1933 YrBlt, 11-30-21



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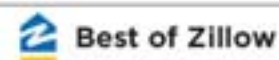
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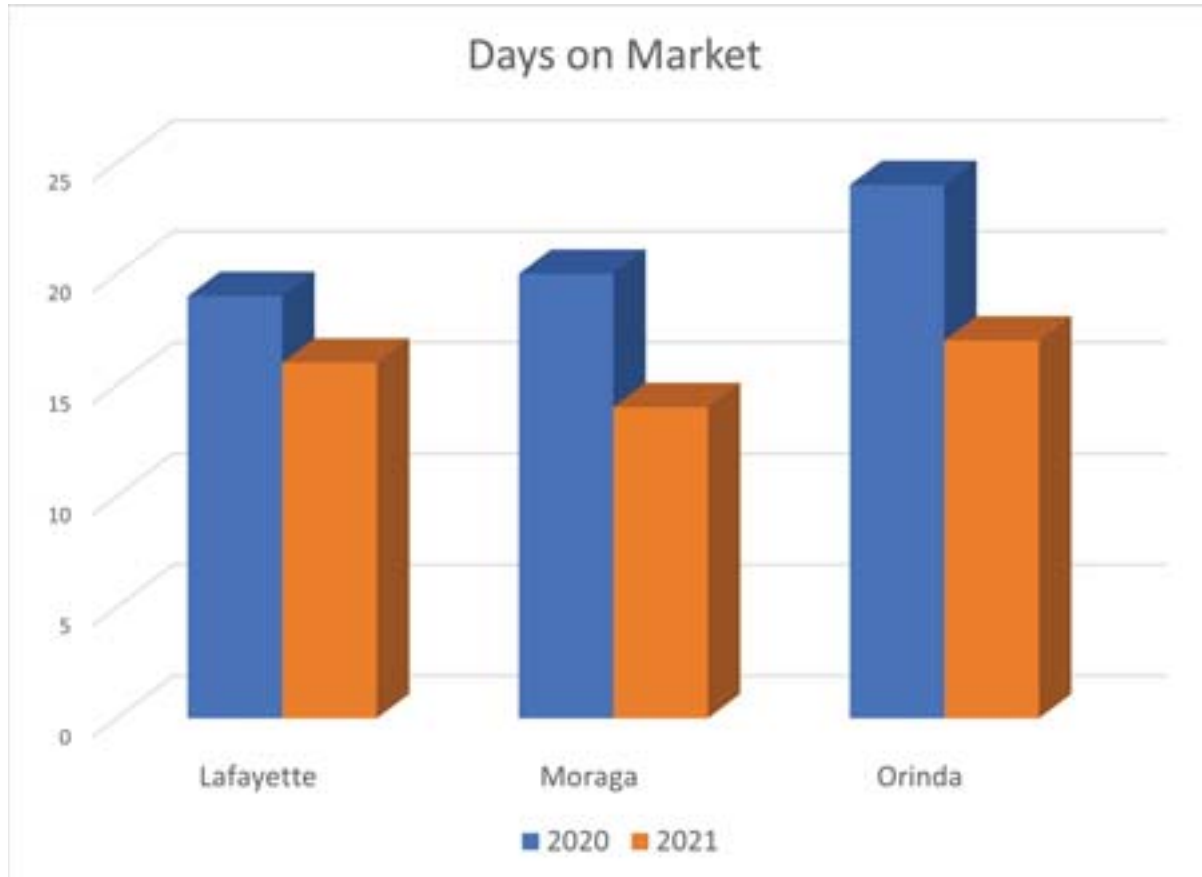


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## The Real Estate Year in Review



### By Conrad Bassett, Licensed Real Estate Broker and CRP, GMS-T

Last year was another extremely strong year for sellers of residential real estate in Lamorinda. Sales volume was solid with a minimal increase in supply matched by continued strong demand and desirable interest rates; the result was average prices went up in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda. The ongoing pandemic did not slow the market at all.

Homes stayed on the market for a similar limited time like in 2019 and 2020 and the majority of homes sold at or above their asking price.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported for closings Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2021, 417 single family homes closed in Lafayette versus 344 in 2020 and 288 in 2019. For the 417 reported closings, sales prices ranged from \$840,000 to \$11.5 million

and the average time on market was 16 days, a decrease from the 19 days in 2020.

The average sales price was \$2,124,266 – a significant increase from \$1,916,042 in 2020 – and from the \$1,789,012 in 2019, the \$1,736,519 in 2018 and the \$1,625,636 in 2017. The average price has doubled in the last decade.

The average sales price was 107.5% of the final list price, which in 2021 was \$1,975,464. Again, it is only an average, but the average sales price in dollars was just about \$150,000 above the average asking price. In 2020 it was 101.7% of the final list price. This comes from a combination of properties being listed well below their actual value and in some cases “bidding wars” that pushed up prices. There were two Lafayette foreclosures sold on the MLS.

Only seven homes closed below \$1 million.

In Moraga there were 184 single family closings in 2021, with 175 single family

closings in 2020 and 129 single family closings in 2019. Prices ranged from \$1.06 million to \$3.9 million. The average sales price was \$1,926,353. In 2020 it was \$1,590,853, \$1,486,327 in 2019 and \$1,485,713 in 2018. It was \$1,388,287 in 2017 and \$1,272,179 in 2016. As in Lafayette, the average home price has doubled in the last decade.

The average number of days on market in 2021 was 14. In 2020 it was 20. The average home sold for 109% of its asking price. The average list price was \$1,777,012 so the average home sold for about \$150,000 above asking. A year ago, it sold for 102% of its last list price. There was one REO property that closed on the MLS and no short sales.

In Orinda the number of single-family closings was 373 versus 302 a year ago – an increase from the 261 in 2019. The reported sales ranged in price from \$925,000 to \$8 million with an average price of \$2,187,385. In 2020 it was \$1,889,942. In 2019 it was \$1,629,030 and in 2018 it was \$1,729,306. In 2017 it was \$1,614,279 and 2016 it was \$1,577,727. Again, the average sales price has more than doubled in the last 10 years. The average market time was 17 days – down from 24 days a year ago.

The average sales price was an average of 108% of the final list price. A year ago it was 101.7% of the final list price for the reported sales. There were no REO (bank owned) sales in Orinda in 2021.

There were three reported sales in Canyon in the MLS in 2021 and the average sales price was \$1,082,667.

On an average price per square foot basis for reported sales in 2021, Lafayette homes sold for \$823.60, well above the \$703.44 in 2020 and up from 2019 when it was \$671.90.

In 2021, Moraga homes sold for \$775.04 per square foot versus \$644.18 in 2020. In 2019, Moraga homes sold for \$610.00 per square foot.

In Orinda last year homes sold for \$797.26 per square foot, versus \$672.53 in 2020 and \$624.28 per square foot for the average home in 2019.

... continued on Page D14

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SOLD  
in  
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## *Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian*

### **Houseplant housemates**



Leek growing in water. Photos Cynthia Brian



Orchids add beauty and elegance to any room and will re-bloom.



Lucky Bamboo will grow in water or soil and thrives in low to medium light.

... continued from Page D1

Put gravel or small pebbles at the bottom of the pot. Poke a chopstick or pencil into the soil. If it comes out soggy, do not water. If it is dry, offer hydration to your plant friend. Plants may dry out more quickly in winter when forced air heaters are operating. Most plants may require water once a week or less.

3. Fertilize according to directions. Stop feeding plants in the winter. Start again in the spring. Leafy green plants will need nitrogen, plants that flower want phosphorous.

4. Eradicate bugs. Placing a clove of garlic in the soil is a great way to keep your friend bug-free. To kill bugs, place a clove of garlic in the soil. Mealybugs, aphids, and scale can be removed with a spray solution of water, alcohol, and dish detergent. The solution can also be rubbed on the leaves. Make sure to let the soil dry out if fungus gnats appear.

5. Maintain humidity. Cacti enjoy dry conditions; however, most plants prefer 50% humidity. In winter, our homes tend to be drier. If containers can be lifted, add a saucer of pebbles filled with water to increase the humidity, or spray with a fine mist. Another idea is to take your plant into your bathroom or shower.

6. Trim spent blossoms and dead leaves. When flowers are finished

blooming, or leaves die, remove them as soon as possible to allow for new growth.

7. Other things. Always read the instructions on care before making a purchase. Turn all houseplants a quarter turn at least once every two weeks to maintain their shape as most will reach for the sunlight.

If you receive plants as gifts, make sure to remove wrapping to allow for good drainage. Living Christmas trees need to be moved outdoors. Depending on the size, you may be able to use the tree for next year's holidays. Or you may need to transplant your tree into a larger container to keep on your patio. If you are going to plant it in the ground, determine the placement carefully as these trees will grow into very large evergreens with expansive roots.

One final interest of mine that is an educational and exciting experiment for children is rooting vegetables in a glass of water on a windowsill. Avocados, fennel, scallion, green onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and leeks grow quickly. Refresh the water daily. I currently am growing leeks and continue to use the green tops in my cooking.

With a little effort, your interiors will be healthier and more stunning with the introduction of living greens. Bring nature indoors with you while enjoying cleaner air living happily with your organic artistic housemates.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



**This fiddle-leaf fig, also known as ficus lyrata, has been growing for 35 years.**



**Pothos can be grown from a cutting, enjoys low light, and is the easiest plant to grow.**



**Sansevieria, the snake plant, rarely needs water.**



**Spider plants are the easiest to grow in any condition.**



**This fifteen-year-old variegated bromeliad grew pups and continues to bloom.**

## Lamorinda home sales recorded

... continued from Page D2

### ORINDA

- 8 Avis Court, \$2,101,500, 4 Bdrms, 2399 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 11-29-21  
73 Brookwood Road #13, \$700,000, 2 Bdrms, 1020 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 12-06-21,  
Previous Sale: \$330,000, 08-12-03  
125 Canon Drive, \$1,350,000, 4 Bdrms, 2680 SqFt, 1933 YrBlt, 11-30-21  
564 Dalewood Drive, \$3,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 3986 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 12-01-21,  
Previous Sale: \$2,727,000, 06-15-20  
21 Keith Drive, \$2,201,000, 4 Bdrms, 4696 SqFt, 1991 YrBlt, 12-02-21,  
Previous Sale: \$1,225,000, 01-25-99  
117 Meadow View Road, \$1,300,000, 2 Bdrms, 1644 SqFt,  
1952 YrBlt, 12-10-21, Previous Sale: \$615,000, 06-30-04  
11 Ranch Road, \$3,035,000, 3 Bdrms, 3826 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 12-07-21  
54 Saint Stephens Drive, \$1,900,000, 4 Bdrms, 2674 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 11-30-21  
17 Shadow Creek Lane, \$2,628,000, 4 Bdrms, 3284 SqFt, 1982 YrBlt, 11-29-21,  
Previous Sale: \$1,600,000, 05-03-17  
60 Via Floreado, \$2,500,000, 3 Bdrms, 2254 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 12-03-21

## The Real Estate Year in Review

... continued from Page D4

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had 36 closings, up from 31 closings in 2020. Sales prices ranged in 2021 from \$628,000 to \$1,835,000. Moraga had 118 closed units, up from 71 in 2020. Sales ranged from \$350,000 to \$1.5 million. This includes “attached” homes in Moraga Country Club. Orinda had 13 closings, up from five in 2020. Eight of these were in the complexes on Brookwood Road and the others in Orindawoods. They sold from \$420,000 to \$1.495 million.

It should always be noted that there are also a few direct sales that do not go through the MLS and they are not reported here. These are usually sales between private individuals.

As of Jan. 8, there were only 25 dwellings under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined, with asking prices of \$1.049 million to \$12.8 million. It should be pointed out that there are no REOs and no short sales. Prices have continued to rise over the last few years and more owners now have equity in their homes and have not had to go the short-sale process or face foreclosure.

A comparison of year-end inventory in the three communities combined shows 18 homes on the market. Last January there were 49 homes on the market. Seasonally the biggest inventory is in the spring and early summer, however this current number may point to another year with a combination of qualified buyers vying for a continued limited supply. The current asking prices range from \$1 million to \$6.5 million in the three communities combined.

In Lamorinda in 2020, 55 homes sold for over \$3 million! In Lafayette alone 56 sold for \$3 million or more in 2021.

Mortgage rates have remained historically low. Corporate relocations have slowed down due to their employees being able to continue to work remotely. Many of these relocations will likely come to pass once offices more fully reopen. We have not seen many outbound relocations for people working for companies who have announced that their corporate headquarters will be moving out of the state.

The minimal amount of single-family new construction has helped keep supply and demand within a better balance than a lot of other neighboring communities.

The East Bay communities like Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda as well as Piedmont and several neighborhoods in Oakland and Berkeley continue to benefit from their proximity to San Francisco where prices remain very high. Comparably speaking, the East Bay is still relatively more affordable.

The trend that began in 2011 continues today where in many situations in the three communities, the seller receives multiple offers and homes sell for above the list price. This, when coupled with a relatively low supply and a willingness by sellers to be realistic in their pricing should continue to fuel a strong market in 2022.

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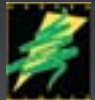
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