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## Planning Commission recommends water conservation ordinance



By Jennifer Wake

The Lafayette Planning Commission at its Sept. 6 meeting discussed a city-initiated amendment to the Lafayette Municipal Code adding a new chapter titled “Water Efficient Landscaping” to implement the state mandate requiring local jurisdictions to implement water efficient landscape design and irrigation practices.

According to the staff report presented by Assistant Planner Joshua Muller, the

Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo) is a state regulation designed to prevent water from being wasted on irrigated landscapes. “The law is important because about half of the water directed to urban areas is used on irrigated landscapes,” Muller noted in the staff report. “The MWELo was created in 1993 from the 1990 Water Conservation and Landscaping Act and was updated in 2015 at the height of the drought. Additionally, Article 8 of SB 1383 requires MWELo

compliance as related to compost and mulching.”

In 2015, the State of California adopted Executive Order B-29-15 which tasked the Department of Water Resources to update the MWELo regulations to increase water efficiency standards for new and existing landscapes through irrigation systems, graywater usage, onsite storm water capture, and by limiting the portion of landscapes that can be covered in turf, according to the report.

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## Ashley Dias’ legacy lives on



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A plaque commemorating Ashley Dias was erected Sept. 2 in honor of the heroic crossing guard who lost his life Sept. 8, 2021.

By Sharon K. Sobotta

When Ashley Dias left for his post as a crossing guard outside of Stanley Middle School on Wednesday, Sept. 8, 2021, he told his mom he’d see her in a bit. That was the last time Gloria Dias saw her son alive.

“I kept listening for the door and watching the clock and I wondered why he was so slow in getting home,” Gloria Dias recalls. “And then I got a call from John Muir hospital

telling me that my son was there and I should come.”

Ashley’s siblings cautioned his mom that things must’ve been bad, but she didn’t believe it would be that bad. When Gloria got to the hospital, she was met by her daughter Vanessa, who she remembers crying hysterically. “That’s when a social worker came to me and asked me to go upstairs and identify my son’s body,” Gloria says. “It broke my heart. I lifted the covers and he was still warm,

but covered in bruises.” As Gloria stood there in shock trying to make sense of the loss of her son, an EMT approached her and told her something that she says gave her a little bit of peace. “He told me I’m sorry your son died, but he was a hero. He said that if it wasn’t for Ashley, his little girl would have been dead, as he showed me her picture.”

But more tragically, Gloria says, is that if it wasn’t for someone driving recklessly, all lives could have been spared. “The grandmother who ran Ashley over already had the kids she was picking up in the car. Even if she was running late, late is better than never. I will never get to see my son again.”

In 2021 Ashley Dias became one of some 7,845 pedestrians killed in the United States. The number of pedestrian deaths rose to a 40-year high, according to the Governor’s Highway Safety Association. This statistic has people across the nation rethinking how to keep people on foot safe. The fact that Dias died

while patrolling the streets to keep other pedestrians safe around schools has Lamorinda residents grappling with the same issue. “I’m advocating for there to be a safety awareness day in honor of my son, Ashley Dias,” Gloria says. “It’s a time to really remind people to slow down and drive safe.”

On Friday, Sept. 2 nearly 100 Lafayette residents, city officials, friends and family gathered in downtown Lafayette to remember Dias and bear witness to the unveiling of a plaque in his honor. The plaque reads: ‘In memory of courageous crossing guard Ashley Dias, who was struck and killed by a vehicle on September 8, 2021 while protecting children in a crosswalk in front of Stanley Middle School. Let this be a solemn reminder of drivers to please slow down and let our children and community be safe.’

Lafayette City Attorney Mala Subramanian worked with the Dias family to determine the verbiage of the plaque. Subramanian says the message on the plaque is a

good reminder not only for drivers when they’re behind the wheel but to people in the world at large. “I think it’s important to remember to slow down. That’s an important theme for life.” She added that she’s been awestruck by the strength and perseverance of the Dias family since they lost Ashley.

While Ashley Dias has in a way become a poster child for the cause of slowing down, his family and friends want him to be remembered for much more than that. Dias lived and worked in the field of biotech in San Francisco until he moved back to his childhood stomping grounds of Lafayette during the pandemic to lend a hand with his mom. “My colon collapsed after my second dose of the vaccine and I needed a helping hand,” Gloria says. “Since he was working remotely he came back. He took good care of me and helped me get to my appointments and made me meals that looked like they were being served in a restaurant.

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