



Photo Jeff Heyman

Acalanes seniors enjoy spirited car rally prior to graduation

By Jeff Heyman

Hundreds of cheering supporters of the Acalanes High School Class of 2023, many with air horns, balloons and colorful signs, lined Mt. Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette on May 19 as a car parade of graduates slowly made its way through the city's downtown.

Dozens of elaborately decorated vehicles participated in the hour-long parade, which ran from 5 to 6 p.m., and has become a new annual tradition in Lafayette. Making their way behind a Lafayette Police and Con Fire firetruck escort, proud moms, dads and grads, some standing and waving to the exuberant crowd through car sunroofs, drove slowly up and down the boulevard.

One particularly lively crowd of onlookers could be found in front of the Roundup Saloon, the watering hole that is often Lafayette's unofficial community center. There, generations of relatives and friends of all ages whooped, screamed, waved streamers, balloons and signs and let off ear-splitting air horns as each car full of graduates passed. There could be found in the crowd a range of cowbells to add to the joyous cacophony.

In return, the vehicles, many displaying the names of the grad and the university that they will attend in the fall, honked their horns as the beaming grads whooped and screamed back at the crowd, letting off their own air horns. All in all, it was a very festive, very noisy celebration along Lafayette's main thoroughfare in honor of Acalanes's Class of 2023. (See the list of graduates from Acalanes, Miramonte and Campolindo on Pages A9 and A10.)

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Lamorinda Weekly writer, photographer win CNPA awards

The California News Publishers Association (CNPA) recently announced winners of its 2022 California Journalism Awards, which included a first-place award for Lamorinda Weekly reporter Jon Kingdon's story, "Donna de Varona Olympic gold medalist and Title IX crusader," and a second-place award for the photo essay by photographer Jeff Heyman, entitled "Season filled with small town charm." Congratulations to our team!

EBMUD presents council with update on Lafayette Reservoir Tower

By Lou Fancher

The city council on May 8 heard an update on the Lafayette Reservoir Tower Seismic Retrofit Project. Presented by a team of directors and engineers from East Bay Municipal Utility District, director John A. Coleman said feedback received from the council and members of the public in response to the report given in January was appreciated. He and his department agreed with many points concerning the tower's aesthetics and said the design team's new ideas had drawn inspiration from the community and had led to implementing some of them in the updated designs.

Coleman emphasized that while retrofitting the tower in such a way that it fit into the aesthetics of the environment was vital, upgrades and changes at the dam must always be enacted without compromising safety.

EBMUD Engineering Manager Elizabeth Bialek followed, reviewing the functions and important features of the tower. The overall facility has a "fair"

rating from the state's Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD), largely due to the tower that functions as a vital spillway at the dam. However, studies conducted in 2005 revealed the tower's extended, above-water height, if left unaddressed and subject to forces from a large earthquake, could suffer damage or complete structural failure. If damaged extensively, the tower would not be able to operate as a spillway or outlet for the reservoir, especially during heavy rainfalls.

Alterations to the tower proposed in 2017 included some measures not approved by DSOD and one, shortening the tower, that did meet industry safety standards. The designs for the shortened tower received significant push-back from the council and the community, mostly due to the possible loss of the iconic "house" that had long stood as an emblem for the city. Lafayette resident Matt Bertics, a structural engineer who specializes in seismic design, said in written public comment that he supports EBMUD's decision to remove

the seismically deficient portion of the tower, but believes a tall but light-weight steel replacement tower that honors the original iconic tower can be designed.

Bialek emphasized that the mandated retrofit will ensure the dam and the tower will remain viable in the event of all situations, including a major earthquake. She reviewed the current seismic deficiencies: modeling and comparative studies indicate a large earthquake would bend and fracture rebar in the tower and render it inoperable. A comprehensive study using state-of-the-art finite element analysis showed that reducing the height of the tower to an elevation of 460 feet would move the tower from a level of risk that is presently "marginal" to a level where failure was not a primary concern.

Additionally, a conduit retrofit she described will provide improved safety underneath the tower, with new steel liners added to a 150 foot expanse of the conduit downstream of the tower.

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