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Roundabout at Pleasant Hill Road and Olympic Blvd

Photo Sora O'Doherty

# New safety measures for roundabout in Lafayette moving forward

By Lou Fancher

Public concern about pedestrian and bicycle safety were at the forefront at the city council meeting March 25, as Engineering Services Manager Matt Luttrupp brought to the council new design modifications related to the reconfiguration of the roundabout at Pleasant Hill Road and Olympic Boulevard. Luttrupp outlined new enhancements added to the plan following considerable input from residents at public outreach open town halls and in comments submitted online or by post, along with a number of meetings held by the Transportation and Circulation Commission (TransCirc) and staff presentations and discussions by city council between 2021 and 2024.

As part of the city's 2024 Surface Seal Program, traffic engineering firm Kimley Horn had been hired during the project's earliest iteration (in 2021) to assist in addressing transportation standard-compliant

design changes aimed at increasing safety. In consultation with TransCirc, residents, bicycle, and pedestrian advocates, including Bike East Bay and the City Manager, focused primarily on modifications designed to reduce vehicular speeds. Suggestions included lane narrowing, a reduction in the number of vehicle lanes on southbound Pleasant Hill Road, a reduction in the length of the right-turn slip lane from westbound Olympic Boulevard, and the installation of rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) at one of the crosswalks, speed bumps, and other traffic-calming features.

These preliminary plans were reviewed by staff, slightly modified, and then shared with TransCirc in November 2022. Staff implemented temporary versions of the modifications using paint and delineators in early 2023, and additional changes were

made at the council's direction in March 2023. Since that time, traffic speeds and delays have been monitored, and confirm that speeds on southbound Pleasant Hill Road have dropped from 46 to 35 mph, while traffic delays have not increased.

A virtual public meeting held in January this year showed residents evenly split on several modifications, such as lane drops and the amount of signage. Suggestions made included adding speed bumps, moving bike lanes, and adding an RRFB crosswalk to the eastern leg of the roundabout. At a TransCirc meeting Feb. 5, staff received additional enhancement recommendations that Luttrupp reviewed for the council at the meeting.

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## Lafayette school board rejects plan to eliminate AIM class

By Sora O'Doherty

A very large number of speakers, including current students, parents, and former students, showed up at the meeting of the Lafayette School Board on March 13 and spoke out against a plan to eliminate the AIM class for fourth and fifth grade students. After hearing recommendations and data from staff, and public comments, the Board decided not to proceed with getting rid of the AIM class at this time.

The discussion focused on two elements of the class, which is intended to group 25 gifted students from all four Lafayette elementary schools in one class for both fourth and fifth grade. One element was how the selection of students is made, and the other element is the nature of the class itself.

The board was presented with some data that seemed to show that the selection of students was skewed

such that it favored male students and disfavored female students, as well as Black and Hispanic students. However, a group of parents of AIM students criticized the way that the data was compiled.

Lafayette is alone in Lamorinda in having a special class for gifted and talented education, which has in the past been labeled as GATE, but is now known in the Lafayette School District (LAFSD) as AIM, meaning Alternative Instructional Model.

After hearing the analysis, the recommendations, and the comments from the public, the majority of the board seemed to agree with the parents and students that what the AIM class is really about is, as one director put it, "that students felt close bonds with their fellow classmates, that they felt safe in their environment."

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## Celebrating spring: Lamorinda's colorful Holi Festivities

Submitted by Gayatri Krishnakumar



Photos courtesy Saurav Mohapatra

The extended Indian community welcomed the arrival of spring with a joyful Holi celebration at the Orinda Community Park on Sunday, March 24. This traditional Indian festival, known for its vibrant colors and lively atmosphere, brought families and

friends together for an afternoon of food and fun.

Attendees participated in the celebration, applying colors (flour with food grade coloring) onto each other.

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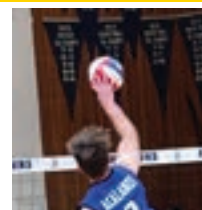


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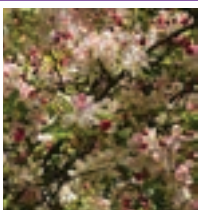
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