

Summer fun 101

By Lou Fancher



Photo Sora O'Doherty

During summer months, family-friendly fun and fantastic food have happy collisions all along Mt. Diablo Boulevard. And while most residents know and visitors soon discover Lafayette's 16 miles of hiking trails and plentiful green spaces found in accessible neighborhood and community parks and at the city's iconic Lafayette Reservoir area, it's also surprisingly simple to satisfy all the usual summer yearnings within even the downtown core.

A good place to start an expedition is Lafayette Plaza, where a lush carpet of grass and comfortable seating allows kids to cartwheel and cavort, while adults catch up on friends' latest news or make new acquaintances. After the kids have burnt off some energy, bounce up the boulevard to The Hideout Kitchen and Cafe, which recently moved into the space formerly occupied by Cooperage restaurant, which has moved to Walnut Creek.

While the interior space is noteworthy, opt for outdoor seating and consider popular items like the Wafflesandwich that wedges country fried steak, cheddar, and eggs between two waffles before dousing it with sausage gravy, butter, and powdered sugar. If waffles aren't wanted, the menu extends far beyond into delicious sharable starters, classic America and Filipino main dishes, and salads that include the Harvest Bowl and The Lafayette, a blend of greens, berries, bulgarian feta, cherry tomato, cucumber, croutons, toasted almonds, and balsamic vinaigrette dressing. Bringing the family pup is kosher too -- the outdoor patio is dog-friendly. hideoutkitchen.com

Having savored new treats at the Hideout, nostalgia might hit and for that—a visit to Zoonie's Candy Shop is in order. Located in the same space where the former Powell's operated, new owners bought the sweets shop in 2019. Inside, explore classic and novelty candies—Zotz Fizz, SloPokes, Zagnut and Yoo-hoo candy bars, Gob stoppers, Botlecaps, a plethora of gummy candies and Jelly Belly jelly beans, and so much more. The gelato and specialty chocolate items (the peanut butter cups beat Reese's every time) appeal to the most discerning sweet imbibers, but no one needs to leave empty handed. Even for the non-hungry, there's a lineup of gag-to-great gifts at low enough prices to fit the budget. zoonie's-candy.com

For many folks, a sense of belonging comes not from shopping but from being invested in and involved with the community. The Mt. Diablo corridor steps up for these worthy seekers, with options such as joining a book club at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, visiting the Lafayette Community Garden to learn about their programs and fill out an application form to become a member in 2025 (the garden has reached full membership capacity for 2024), or fulfilling a civic mission by investigating the city's Creeks Committee that works to spread awareness about creek maintenance and pollution prevention. According to the city's website, the current creek committee has one member vacancy and two individuals whose terms expire in June of 2024. llcd.org, lafayettecommunitygarden.org, www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/city-departments/public-works/creeks.

Spinning back toward ground zero, the beer garden at Headlands Brewing entices walkers-by to bench themselves or find a shady spot at a communal table. Order a Diablo Double IPA, Pt. Bonita Pilsner or any of the drink menu's small batch and guest beers, wine, cider, non-alcohol adult drinks, and kid's drinks. headlandsbrewing.com

Finally, returning to the corner of Moraga Road and the boulevard, catch the Lamorinda Idol Finalist showcase at the last Rock the Plaza Summer Concert Series on June 28. Be sure to think ahead and mark the calendar for the Lafayette Art & Wine Festival Sept. 21 and 22 at the same location.

Lafayette City council tackles budget deficit

By Lou Fancher

Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson, in presenting the Fiscal Year 24-25 proposed budget resolution for council's consideration at the meeting June 10, opened her comments with a budget 101-style report. "This may be remedial to some members of the council," Robinson said, "but we want to make sure members of the community really understand how our budget works, what our limitations are, (and) why we're having the fiscal sustainability issues we're having now. We think that's a very important base to have as you continue this conversation...and continue it in the coming weeks."

Municipal money often comes with strings attached in the form of rules governing how funds can be spent. Money is segregated by the city into three "buckets" labeled General Fund, Gas Tax, and Impact Fees. The General Fund is most flexible, but also suffers the greatest shortfalls, Robinson said.

Outlining revenue sources, she first focused on property taxes. Robinson said the median selling price of Lafayette homes is \$2 million and from that many people mistakenly assume significant tax property payments are received. Lafayette receives only 6% of the 1% collected, meaning a \$1 million home will generate only \$600 for the city.

Lafayette's sales tax is 8.75% and of that, the city receives only 1%. Robinson said revenues also go toward funding police, public works, planning, administration, and parks and recreation maintenance expenses.

The General Fund holds approximately 60% of its funds as reserves for emergencies, such as fires, floods, earthquakes, and other events. American Rescue Plan Act (FEMA) federal relief reimburses require long time frames, which means the reserves need to be maintained and depleting them could place the city at risk in the event of a catastrophic disaster emergency.

Robinson said during her 25 years with the city, the budget balance has always been met, but increasingly, that successful history is unsustainable. Broadly speaking, municipality expenses are trending up, with revenues remaining flat or declining.

In addition to detailed information further explaining expenditures and forces driving the projected budget deficit, Robinson outlined mitigation strategies proposed by the Fiscal Sustainability Subcommittee, such as a freeze put on new staff hires, among

other, more impactful, actions.

Staff recommended the Council consider a sales tax increase of up to 1%, which would bring the rate up to 9.75%. This is the same as current sales tax rates in Moraga and Orinda. While the council considers the increases, the staff recommended the remaining \$1.99 million in ARPA funds be directed to General Fund projects in Fiscal Year (FY) 24-25. This action would allow the General Fund to sustain the reserve requirement this fiscal year and through FY 25-26.

In a recent poll, 93% of respondents indicated satisfaction with the level of services currently provided and quality of life. Staff recommended not making any immediate reductions to the budget or tax changes without providing more opportunities for community input about potential cuts and whether they would be willing to support a sales tax measure instead.

Robinson said staffing freezes, increased city fees, cutting services, and other measures would still not be enough to correct the structural problems causing a projected deficit. However, the projected \$2.3 million imbalance for FY 24-25 could be mitigated by applying the \$1.99 million in remaining ARPA funds that must be committed by December 2024 and spent by December 2026. The one-time money will extend "the runway" for the city while structural elements are addressed, according to Robinson.

Following an extended discussion and public comments, council member Wei-Tai Kwok summarized the forecasted budget profile and asked for confirmation that the council was being asked by staff to vote on deficit spending of \$2.461 million in uses which would reduce the reserve to lower levels but preserve the 60% target for two fiscal years, among other measures.

Mayor Gina Dawson concluded the budget discussion saying it was "exactly the exercise that Vice Mayor Kwok and I were hoping to go through" and emphasized the subcommittee and staff work, as well as public comments received, were appreciated. The council voted unanimously to apply ARPA funds to the budget gap, freeze staff hiring, and authorize staff to update data within the budget report. They will continue to consider the proposed tax increases and other actions as more information and community feedback becomes available before formally adopting the budget plan.



KEITH KATZMAN
I'M SELLING LAMORINDA!

Moraga resident since 1966. Successfully selling real estate for over 38 years.

925.376.7777
keith.katzman@compass.com
DRE # 00875484



930 B Street | San Rafael



Commercial Building | Offered for \$1,600,000

3 Hansen Court | Moraga



Represented Buyer

4033 Terra Granada



Represented Buyer & Seller

Your Strategic Partner

When you're preparing your home for market, it makes sense to assess what improvements can be made so that you're not leaving money on the table at closing. But what are those improvements? Let's work together well before a sale so that you can benefit from my expertise as a strategic partner!

As always, I am here to help ... I listen and I care

Compass is a real estate broker licensed by the State of California and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws. License Number 01866771. All material presented herein is intended for informational purposes only and is compiled from sources deemed reliable but has not been verified. Changes in price, condition, sale or withdrawal may be made without notice. No statement is made as to accuracy of any description. All measurements and square footage are approximate.

COMPASS

BRYDON & IVES
REAL ESTATE TEAM

151 Camelia Lane
PRICE IMPROVEMENT \$1,795,000



Buyer Represented Sale!
21 ASHBROOK, MORAGA



Trust in our experience to elevate your results and redefine your real estate journey!



Work with us!

Lisa Brydon & Kristi Ives
925.788.8345
brydonivesteam.com
DRE 01408025 | DRE 01367466
Follow us @brydonives

COMPASS

Compass is a real estate broker licensed by the State of California and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws. License Number 022725. All material presented herein is intended for informational purposes only and is compiled from sources deemed reliable but has not been verified. Changes in price, condition, sale or withdrawal may be made without notice. No statement is made as to accuracy of any description. All measurements and square footage are approximate.