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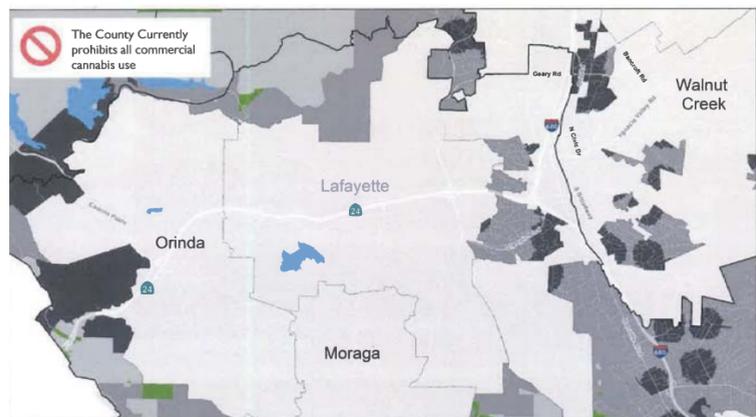
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**WHAT'S YOUR HOUSE WORTH IN 2018?**

## Is the county rushing to bring in commercial cannabis regulations?

By Pippa Fisher



Map provided

The county is seeking feedback from municipal councils and members of the public as it looks to prepare regulations around cannabis in the unincorporated areas of Contra Costa County.

County Supervisor Candace Andersen and Director of Conservation and Development John Kopchik gave a presentation of the county's preliminary framework, addressing commercial cannabis and outdoor personal use growth at the Feb. 26 Lafayette City Council meeting as part of the supervisors'

efforts to receive feedback from towns and cities across the county.

Lafayette already has some of the most restrictive laws pertaining to cannabis in the area. Residents are allowed indoor growth of up to six plants for personal use, deliveries are allowed but only with electronic payment transactions, and no commercial activities are permitted within the city.

Currently the county also prohibits all commercial cannabis. The question of whether to allow commercial or outdoor personal

use growth in unincorporated areas with different land-use permits, such as the Saranap area, that are adjacent to the city was being explored at the meeting.

Kopchik showed maps of the county illustrating buffer zones of 1,000 feet around sensitive sites (such as schools, parks/playgrounds, libraries, drug treatment centers and homeless shelters) and 500 feet around residential sites.

Kopchik explained that an unincorporated county cannabis tax initiative could be considered by

voters at the next general election in November. Unincorporated voters would vote on the tax ballot and he added the intent is that the commercial cannabis ordinance would only take effect if and when voters pass a tax initiative.

Many speakers took their turns making it clear that they completely oppose any commercial cannabis activities, referring most often to the effect on teenagers as well as potential for increased crime and car accidents.

Alcohol Drug Abuse Prevention Team Director Jaime Rich urged the county to keep the ban. She said students she has worked with have reported kids having seizures in the classroom as a result of marijuana. Rich spoke specifically about the issue of delivery, the problems of keeping the drug out of the hands of those under 21 and suggested they look very closely at the language surrounding delivery laws. In Lafayette deliveries must go into a secured location.

Andersen and Kopchik were specifically seeking input on the buffer zones, caps on permits,

outdoor personal growing and the council's overall reaction.

While council members Mike Anderson, Ivor Samson and Mark Mitchell approved of the plan in theory, Mayor Don Tatzin was a little more cautious saying he hopes the county would adopt the same rules as the adjacent cities. Anderson urged residents to make their voices heard at county meetings, reminding the audience that what they had heard that evening pertained only to unincorporated areas and not to the city of Lafayette.

Vice Mayor Cam Burks was absolutely clear in his message. He said he saw no need to hurry and that the county should come back to this in a year. "Why the rush? Why not wait to see the impacts on law and order?"

"I am completely opposed to moving forward," he said, to the audience's delight.

Supervisor Andersen will be presenting the framework to Moraga on March 14 and to Orinda on March 20 (this date is tentative).

Advertising, paid for via crowd funding with petitioners

## An Open Letter to the AUHSD Governing Board Members

We represent a large number of parents from Lamorinda and Walnut Creek with children ranging from elementary through high school ages. We are writing to express our concerns regarding the proposed calendar changes. In particular, these issues have come to light:

- The Calendar Task Force is composed of 48 high school stakeholders and only 41 K-8 stakeholders, leading to a lopsided view of the best interests of the community as a whole.** Our community is composed of 16,937 students, including 11,592 K-8 students and 5,345 HS students. While we understand this is an initiative driven by the high school level, the outcome affects the entire student population and the unrepresentative makeup of the Calendar Task Force is concerning. According to the Task Force's own internal survey, 85% of its members favor a shift in the calendar to an earlier August start, a number that far exceeds the percentage in favor from the overall community. To give an indication of the level of disagreement with a calendar shift, even with the bias built into the survey, our community still came out 50-50 against an earlier August start. The Task Force has been blinded in its echo chamber and has dismissed opposing views as "aggressive" and has even referred to community members with opposing views as "ignorant" and "uninformed."
- The survey presented to the overall community was biased in favor of promoting an earlier school year start; its results are unreliable and not indicative of the community's sentiments as a whole.** The survey was written without transparency and never even presented to the whole Calendar Task Force for review and feedback. The use of partial survey results within the survey itself (as done with question 7 in the parent survey), as well as a video presentation to HS students stating potential benefits of an earlier shift right before they took the survey, breaks the most basic guidelines as to how to create a survey without bias. Please see <https://surveytown.com/10-examples-of-biased-survey-questions/> for the very minimal guidelines this survey did not follow.
- The argument that moving finals before break would decrease stress for students dur-**

**ing December has been presented without anything beyond purely anecdotal and speculative evidence.** Indeed, even the recent survey results from San Ramon, which recently implemented the calendar changes being discussed, indicate minimal, if any, benefit in terms of student stress levels (Question 11 for students on the 2017 Instructional Calendar Student Survey); a) The excessive emphasis placed on stress due to finals is unsubstantiated. Although finals constitute no more than 20% of the grade, they are in actuality only 10 to 15% of the grade for most classes. The impact is negligible unless a student is right on the border. Additionally, school districts that have implemented finals before winter break do not cap the percentage of the grade that finals constitute (eg. Palo Alto, San Ramon, etc.), whereas AUHSD caps finals as a percentage of the grade at 20% so the stress associated with finals in the AUHSD district is distinctly different from other school districts; b) AUHSD only began the block system this year and the school systems has not yet had the time to evaluate whether it has had a positive impact on reducing overall stress levels; c) Many seniors will be coming out of the stress of early admission college applications directly into finals, while many other high school students will be facing ACT/SAT testings in early December; d) Most members of the community participate in family and friend gatherings, concerts, and other holiday performances, while students who celebrate Hanukkah will, in many years, have to endure finals during the holiday itself. December is already a very busy month for a large majority of people, adding finals during the week leading up to winter break would in no way reduce stress for students. The benefit of moving finals before winter break is marginal at best and even then, would only benefit a small number of students relative to the overall school district.

**4. We support the idea of a true break during winter break for student wellness and health; this can be accomplished by enforcing a strict no-homework policy over winter break, something that does not seem to be strictly enforced at this time.** Additionally, a post-Labor Day school start could give students an additional true break in early February between first and sec-

ond semesters. The post-Labor Day start option was never even offered in the survey as an option to decrease stress and give students a true break between the two semesters. Equating a true break with an earlier August start is another example of the shortcomings of the survey.

- There are no benefits for K-8 students that would come from starting the school year earlier, but there are several disadvantages:** a) **Heat:** Many schools in the Orinda Union School District do not have air-conditioning and many other schools throughout our districts are not equipped with solar panels yet to cover the additional cost. Heat is a real concern for elementary school parents and teachers, both in the classroom and on the playground during the sunny and hot month of August. b) **Loss of August family vacation:** August is one of the best summer months to explore the Bay Area and many other places worldwide. There are many people in this community who have ties outside of California, where schools are still in session in June and family visits are only possible in mid-July and August. Many kids attend camps or hold summer jobs in other states and even other countries in July and August. Families with current high schoolers have grown up benefitting from the additional August weeks for vacation - taking it away from the young families with elementary school children now that their children are in high school discounts the experiences of the K-8 community. c) **Kindergarten age cut-off:** The current cut-off is September 1, regardless of the first day of school. More kids would be starting kindergarten before they are five and even more parents will be inclined to hold them back. d) It is disingenuous on the part of the AUHSD Governing Board to point to the K-8 districts' ability to start the school year whenever they want as a reason to dismiss K-8 concerns. Parents want all the calendars to be closely aligned and starting the AUHSD calendar even a week earlier directly affects K-8 calendars.
- Additional time for AP instruction as a justification for starting the school year earlier is unfounded.** Many high performing districts in the country have a post-Labor Day start and have not found it a problem to cover the same nationally mandated material. AP students account

for roughly 14% of the entire student population, which is a very small percentage to warrant such a drastic change for the entire community. Moreover, with a May school end date, AP students would be faced with AP exams and second semester finals in the same month at the end of the school year, which is unnecessary additional stress for those students.

- We could not agree more with the AUHSD Board Member that stated that sports should not be taken into consideration when looking at the academic calendar.** Only 10-15% of the student population takes part in fall sports, the majority of which start after mid-August, and only about 5% start in early August with volleyball and football. Playing a sport is a student's choice and involves many sacrifices. We do not require other students who are not playing a sport to make the same sacrifices in their schedules.
- Our kids need to know that we value their quality of life; they need a healthy outlook regarding test pressures and the many different stresses of life.** By moving the calendar earlier in August and putting finals during a busy holiday season, we are conveying to students that all that matters is more time in school before AP exams and the importance of finals grades. We are telling them that we do not care about their summer vacations, family travel, summer camps and jobs, or decreasing their stress while they are in school. As long as we continue to make policies that place academic performance over quality of life, our kids will internalize those values and high school stress, depression, and other alarming issues will continue to rise.

Based on all these considerations, we ask that the AUHSD Governing Board listen to what our community is saying and vote to uphold our values. We also urge other concerned parents to attend the upcoming AUHSD Governing Board Meetings on March 7 and March 21 at 7:00pm in the AUHSD Community Room (1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette) and declare their opposition to this earlier start during public comment.

Sincerely,  
Lamorinda and Walnut Creek parents

Arran Schultz, Aude and Stefano Gaudio, Caroline Creasey, Anna Juliet Brown, Amber Golik, Jennifer Rosen, Lindsay Beck, Alexis Coyle, Shaday Berrios, Rich Scarpitti, Cavan McCarthy, Lorie Comerford, Jonathan Butler, Stefani Gray, Jon Weber, Claudia Gohler, Amal Mehio, Liza Koukhou, Eirini Papastergiou, Suzanne and Garrett Shore, Ioanna Papadimitriou, Jennifer Kaufman, Brad Williams, Lise Shin, Tricia Moy, Christine Curtis, Maya Vasudevan, Jenn Keohane, Sharyn Harrington, Arian Brackett, Meems Gillette, Jennifer Telford, Lauren Turner, Kristel Rochios, Linda Bowers, Lauren Rubenstein, Stephanie Stevens, Thomas Fraser, Colleen Devine, Nora Nicholson, Jean Follmer, Petet Cole, Jen DuBorg, M. Watanabe, Jeanne Hughes, Jill Rohde, Christina Kutzscher, Caroline Stevens, Susan Lehner, Myeue Capozzi, Joanna Allen, Ginger Stambaugh, Kari Speltz, LeAnna Kievning, Rodica Bizgu-Juwono, Gianna Capozzi, Elaine Cable, Wendi Giordano, Deborah Feeley, Rose Bkeharski, Jennifer Kaplan, Laura Zellmer, Isabella Capozzi, Kelli Bacher, Tiffany Seitler, Deborah Sheng, Rory DeShazer, Kimberly Grover, Jenifer Balducci, Rachel Blatt, Misha Wolfe, Abigail Levin, F. J., Mike Jackson, Kim Wampler, Jamie Patterson, Tiffany Lewis, Julie Hulin, Susan Oppelt, Julia Greenwell, Tina Weber, Sharon Murphy, Anonymous, Amal and Cyril Chombaud, Jennifer Duff, Stephanie Levine Snyder, Petros Karasakalidis, Karyn Caruso, Julie Jageman, Julia and Michael Wolbinski, Joe Capozzi, Danielle Gnestro, Beth Hayes, Michelle Dutra Rumberg, Jennifer Kamal, Judy Nebb Schoenrock, Rebecca Burt McAuliffe, Julia Mater, Michele Kong, Brenna Butler, Rachel Resnick Dreyer, Erica & Zia Shook, Daniel Grover, Kirsia Phillips,

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