

# Letters to the Editor



Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writers and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

All published letters will include the writer's name and town (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only), and should be 350 words or less. Letters may be edited for length or legal considerations.  
**email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com;** Regular mail: **Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570**

Dear Editor,

Loved the chicken story in the edition, Jan. 21, 2009. Of course, I loved it, having raised chickens for yummy eggs at my home on Blackhawk Rd., Lafayette since 1966.

As the story progressed, I had moments of glee, each time you mentioned a neighbor of mine, Jackie Mann, then Michelle Chan. Reading on, and learning a bit of chicken history in Lamorinda, I found another friend and sustainable advocate, Steve Richard.

Reaching the end of a fun and most useful article, I felt a little disappointed. When Steve was talking to you about Sustainable Lafayette, I fully expected mention of our web site, 'sustainablelafayette.net', and the story entitled, 'LIKE TO RAISE YOUR OWN CHICKENS AND HAVE FRESH EGGS IN THE MORNING ? Submitted by: John Kiefer, jhkiefer@comcast.net One of my avocations is to educate & encourage families to construct and raise their very own chickens. To that end, I placed my chicken story on the web site to reach a broader audience, and invite them to visit my organic, sustainable, model operation. So, I felt a little disappointed that the article didn't take the next step to inform our citizenry of the chicken story on the web. Please check the web site and enjoy the chicken story. www.sustainablelafayette.net. Menu: Home, Resident Stories, Food, "Raise Chickens and Have Fresh Eggs in the Morning".

Thanks for your help, and for your excellent writing.

John Kiefer  
Lafayette

To the Editor:

At an alarming rate, trash-collection rates in Orinda, Moraga, and Lafayette are going up. The rate increases will begin on March 1, 2009.

There should be no rate increases during a time of high unemployment and economic stagnation.

Between February 2008 and March 2009, Orinda's garbage rates will rise by a staggering 24.3 percent. It is highly unlikely that the income of the average household in Orinda has gone up 24.3 percent.

Currently, Lamorinda's garbage rates are set by a governmental body, the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority. In January 2009, the authority's board of directors voted unanimously to raise rates. Sitting on the board are members of the city councils of Lamorinda, Danville, and Walnut Creek. Also sitting on the board are Gayle Uilkema and Mary Piepho, both of whom are members of the Board of Supervisors of Contra Costa County.

Orinda City Council member, Victoria Smith, is a board member of the waste authority. She voted for the rate hike and has some explaining to do. In her 2008 re-election bid, she accepted campaign contributions from garbage-collection companies and from the Teamsters Union. Local garbage workers belong to the Teamsters Union.

It is outrageous that garbage rates can be raised without a vote of the people. Garbage rate hikes are the functional equivalents of tax increases. Curiously, local tax increases have to go before voters while garbage rates do not.

The time has come to eliminate government from trash collection. Garbage collection should be privatized. Selecting a garbage company should be the same as picking a gardener. If a privately-selected garbage company raises rates too much, then the company can be fired.

Richard S. Colman  
Orinda

Editor:

For six years now, I have been trying to get a simple adjustment of the lot line between my two parcels in Orinda, to make them each about the same size. Orinda's planning director and city attorney and the City in general have asked me to surrender one of the lots for a scenic easement, get permits for sewer and water for both properties, get surveys, get soils reports, get reports on story pole placement if someone might someday build, and to indemnify Orinda for any lawsuit brought against Orinda by bogus complaint against the city for granting this simple internal lot line adjustment.

This is a case of Orinda's intentionally breaking state law. That law says that a city is forbidden from requiring more than zoning conformity before granting a simple lot line adjustment.

In September 2008, Superior Court Judge Barry Baskin issued an order against the City of Orinda, vacating a City Council Resolution and requiring the City to obey state law. Vogt v. Orinda, Superior Court Case No. 06-1494, tells the whole sorry story.

The judge found that the 6 giant volumes of administrative record, thousands of pages, "contains overwhelming evidence to support the Petitioner's contention" that Orinda had violated state law. Judge Baskin found that Orinda's legal counterarguments were "disingenuous at best," since Orinda had been repeatedly warned of the violation, and state law is crystal clear. This is shameful conduct by a city government in a town otherwise known for its public-spirited and educated citizens.

The Contra Costa Times recently did such an investigative report. It can be found online on that paper's site or by entering a search term "Edward Vogt and Contra Costa Times."

But rather than promptly granting the lot line adjustment (which had been approved 7-0 by the Planning Commission years ago), the city attorney and planning director now want me to start all over again and re-apply for a lot line adjustment. That's a fool's errand. The City Council has all it needs to make its decision. The City Council should review the judge's order and follow it immediately. The Council and its (private law firm) city attorney should end this 6-year outrage and pledge to obey the law in the future.

Edward Vogt  
Orinda

To the Editor:

I was offended by your description of Ayers as a "...respected education professor...". Respected by whom? One of the most radical education institutions in America? I can only bemoan the thousands of young education students whose minds have been poisoned by this anti-American close minded "professor". And then there is the lovely Mrs. Ayers, widely believed to have placed the bomb that killed a young San Francisco policeman and critically injuring another.

The Ayers are a threat to everything that is good about America. Their ideas have a 100% failure rate and have caused great pain and suffering and often death for many millions of people. It is a tragedy that Barack Obama did not have more sense than to seek them out and accept their friendship.

Please see them for who and what they are and keep them out of our community and out of the minds of our precious young people.

Thank you,

Jo Gregg  
Moraga

Dear Editor,

I almost laughed out loud when I saw the Ayers protestor (cover photo Feb 4 issue) carrying a sign which read, Terror is NOT a Catholic Value! Really? Is this person so unaware of his own religion's history that he never heard of the Crusades, the rack, burning at the stake, or the Spanish Inquisition?

If he needs more modern examples, consider the maiming and murder of people engaged in legal, constitutionally protected activities at family planning clinics. How about those nuns who beat small children with the metal edge of rulers? Terrorism has been and is part of every religion.

According to the FBI file, Ayers detonated a bomb at the Pentagon, in the middle of the night, so no one would be hurt.

A computer was disabled for 3 days. Not commendable but, compare

## Public Forum JOIN IT

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section.

Just send your letter to **letters@lamorindaweekly.com** and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum.

that to say, John McCain, who, at the same time period, flew his airplane over Viet Nam. Once in position, he rained bullets, bombs and napalm on the citizens below. We now know the Vietcong were safely underground in their bunkers and tunnels. I know, I know, McCain was just following orders.

If we as a nation intend to end terrorism, we need to lead by example. Admitting our own terrorist acts, especially those perpetrated by leaders and religious groups, would be a good start.

Like a heartfelt confession, it promotes cleansing, forgiveness, and maybe the beginning of the end of terrorism.

Louise Benvenue  
Orinda

Dear Editor,

As the Lafayette City Council considers in the next week its Finance Task Force recommendations for budget cutting I hope that we can all agree that it is not wise to cut police and public works support that the City gives to put on major events. The Chamber of Commerce makes significant donations to beneficiaries through the Art and Wine Festival and especially significant funds are given to our local schools after the Reservoir Run. Beneficiaries from the Lafayette Arts and Wine Festival are, The Lafayette Arts and Sciences Foundation--\$8,500 was presented by check in December to their Board of Directors--, for a total of \$22,350 to LASF, Generations In Jazz, Town Hall Theatre, Las Trampas, Futures Explored, Trust in Education, Sr Help Line, Senior Transportation, Youth Homes, Project Second Chance, Loaves & Fishes, Shelter, Inc., Lafayette Rotary, LMO Sunrise Rotary, Acalanes Football Team, College Park Cross Country Team, and Boy Scout Troup #219. Since the Chamber began hosting the Art and Wine Festival, the Chamber has been able to give over \$127,000 back to the community through their non-profit partners.

The October Lafayette Reservoir Run, hosted by Oakland Athletic Club, the City of Lafayette and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, attracted a minimum of 2,000 runners, hikers, etc., resulting in an \$18,625 donation to Lafayette schools. The checks were sent to Springhill, Lafayette, Happy Valley, Burton Valley and Stanley Middle School PTAs. They have many uses for that money.

These events could not take place without the many sponsors and volunteers that help to cover the cost of the events and provide assistance at those events. Key amongst the assistance are the Lafayette Police Department and Dept. of Public Works to ensure public safety. We are all proud of our community and commend all of the groups who assist the Chamber of Commerce, the business community, and the City in putting them on safely.

Please support the Lafayette PD and the City's Dept. of Public Works in their contributions to these excellent functions.

Lynn Hiden  
Lafayette

Editor:

In today's tough times, the City of Lafayette is looking everywhere for new revenue sources. The City Council seems to focus on our wallets rather than cutting budgets or expenses. Unable to get voter approval for new taxes in 1998, 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2008, innovative approaches are required to shake the quarters from our pockets.

As the CC Times reported, the Council has found one: our creative Council will charge Waste Management a road use "mitigation fee" (around \$380,000) which, by design, is directly passed on to residents - i.e. a tax. Residents' fees will increase by 9% -- more than twice Waste Management's average increase. Our total garbage fees now approach twice Walnut Creek's. After the Council tried to pass the landscape and lighting tax without a vote, residents were promised there would be no new stealth taxes. This garbage fee may be clever, but it's still a new tax without a vote or even cursory community input. We don't need more taxes, we need more fiscal responsibility. Several months ago, our Council voted to give its bloated staff a 7% pay increase -- during an economic maelstrom when everyone else is cutting back. Will Lafayette notice? Do they notice when staff swells to 40+ now, nearly a 500% increase since our incorporation, while our population remains about level?

Lawrence M. Pines, Esq.  
Lafayette

### Lamorinda's Religious Services

---

**Willow Spring Church**

**1675-1689 School Street, Moraga**  
**www.willow.springchurch.org**  
**(925) 376-3550**

**Sunday Service Times:**  
 Prayer @ 8am, Traditional @ 9am,  
 Contemporary @ 10:30am

---

**Weekly Activities:**  
 Wednesday Community Bible Study @ 10am  
 REVERB (youth) @ 7pm  
 Friday Night BLAST! Kids Club @ 6pm  
 Saturday Night Catalyst (Young Adults) @ 7:30pm

---

**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE**  
 Church Services and Sunday School (up to age 20); 10 - 11 AM  
 Informal Testimony Meeting, Wed 7:30 - 8:30 PM  
 24 Orinda Way www.christianscienceorinda.org

Visit our Reading Room and spiritual bookstore  
across from the Orinda movie theater.

---

**Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, 433 Moraga Way Orinda**

8:15 a.m. Traditions Worship Service  
 9:15 a.m. Coffee Fellowship  
 9:40 a.m. Education for all ages  
 10:45 a.m. Celebrations Worship Service

Childcare available for ages 5 and younger

925-254-3422

---

**Our Savior's Lutheran (ELCA)**  
 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette  
 283-3722 • www.oslc.net

**Sunday mornings at OSLC:**  
 Classic Worship, 8:15 am  
 Education Hour, 9:30-10:20 am  
 Contemporary Worship, 10:30 am

Wednesday  
Services  
begin  
Feb 25 7pm  
(see website)

---

**St. Anselm's Episcopal Church**  
 A Loving Community

**Sunday Services:** 8 and 10 AM  
*Active Youth Program, Childcare*

682 Michael Lane, Lafayette, 284-7420, www.stanselms.ws

---

**St. Giles Episcopal Church of Moraga**

Worshipping at St. Mary's College Chapel. All are welcome at our services.  
**9 a.m. Sunday Service:** Holy Communion - with St. Giles' Choir.  
 Child care is available all year.  
 1928 St. Mary's Road, Moraga. 925-376-5770

## City seeks volunteers for vacancies on the City Open Space Committee

**The Lafayette City Council is soliciting applicants to serve on a newly approved City Open Space Committee.**

This new five-seven-member body will be responsible for drafting an open space plan, identify open space opportunities, developing a strategy to acquire open space and to serve as advocates for the acquisition and preservation of open space in Lafayette.

The committee will be asked to deliver its draft plan to the City Council in October 2009.

Members of the committee will be appointed by the City Council on the basis of education, community involvement, training and experience in the fields of city government, and related fields.

Questions regarding the committee may be directed to the City Manager Steven Falk at sfalk@lovelafayette.org.

Individuals interested in this volunteer position may obtain an application from

The City's website at [www.ci.lafayette.ca.us](http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us) or  
 City of Lafayette Offices  
 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 210 or

Call the City's Clerks Office at (925) 284-1968 and an application will be mailed. Completed applications must be received by 5:00 pm on Friday, March 6, 2009.

**The Lafayette City Council is also soliciting applicants to serve on a newly approved City Charter and Communications Committee.**

Dear Editor

It was with real sadness I just learned from the owners, Fely and Bill Ong, that they have sold the restaurant that has been such a part of the life of our family and of many of our friends for the past fifteen years. We'll miss so many things - The times that Fely patiently walked around with the the newest Phillips grand child so the parents and grandparents could finish their dinner. Her mom's instincts were amazingly calming. The patience they had with the various dining requests as the we explored our way through their menu. Even adding a couple of them to it! Their always making you feel you were part of a family. We watched their four children become adults as they they saw us add grandchildren to our family. Here's wishing them all the best in whatever they decide to do next. I'm guessing that after the dedication they showed to their restaurant and customers they - after a hopefully real vacation - will be on to a new adventure, although maybe of a very different kind. Whatever it is - I - and Moraga - will miss them!

Maryly Phillips  
Moraga