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Letters to the Editor

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email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

I must respond to Diana Stephens' recent letter since she repeats Steve Cohn's erroneous calculations purporting to "prove" that Orinda has been subsidizing Moraga's fire service. She claims, yet again, that Orinda has been subsidizing Moraga since the formation of the district in 1997 which is absolutely NOT TRUE. One faulty assumption has resulted in a totally incorrect conclusion.

Our city boundaries are not the same as MOFD's Moraga and Orinda service areas. All multi-city fire districts, including MOFD, ignore city limits and operate according to "areas of service." In the case of MOFD, there are 700 Orinda homes, all of which used to be part of the old Moraga Fire District, included in the service area of the two Moraga fire stations. LOGICALLY, ANY ACCURATE ANALYSIS OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES SHOULD USE THE AREA OF SERVICE, NOT CITY BOUNDARIES, IN DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT CITIZENS ARE SUBSIDIZING THE OTHER'S SERVICE. If one were to make the appropriate analysis, using service area, not city boundaries, then the tax revenues collected in those 700 South Orinda homes should be accrued to the Moraga side of the ledger. Those 700 homes, plus those in the Town of Moraga, are paying the costs of running the two fire stations in Moraga. It could be argued that a significant portion of the tax revenues collected from the additional 800 Orinda homes that are first due for medical emergencies out of Moraga should also be accrued to the Moraga side of the ledger, especially since more than 70% of MOFD's calls are medical emergencies. Perhaps we should be arguing that Moraga has been subsidizing Orinda all this time?

In any case, every homeowner in California is paying the same 1% property tax rate. We are extremely fortunate that the citizens of Orinda and Moraga voted to tax themselves for fire service long before Prop 13 passed or we would be in the same dire financial straits as Contra Costa Fire, Pinole Fire, and East County Fire Districts now find themselves.

I have never heard, as Ms. Stephens claims, MOFD directors or Moraga Council members tell Orinda Council members that the "Orinda taxpayers' subsidy to Moraga is Orinda's problem." Rather, they have taken great pains to demonstrate that THERE IS NO SUBSIDY. Yes, it is true that parts of Sleepy Hollow and the Downs have a longer response time than everyone would like which is the main reason Chief Bradley chose the Sleepy Hollow Homeowners Association to work with first on the new Firewise Communities program. It is my understanding that MOFD is exploring options to address this issue. Yes, EBMUD's water pipes continue to be an issue. But, they are, after all, the property of EBMUD. Why aren't we going after the water district to fix its own pipes? Additionally, it is important to note MOFD has purchased water tankers to compensate for the inadequate water flow in some areas of Orinda.

THE CITY COUNCIL DOES NOT NEED TO FORM YET ANOTHER CITIZENS' TASK FORCE TO STUDY NON-EXISTENT ISSUES --- AGAIN. Citizen's concerns should be taken directly to our elected representatives on the MOFD Board - local control at its best. It is unreasonable and unrealistic to suggest we take revenues from MOFD and give them to the City. It is time to move on and find practical ways of generating revenue to re-build our roads and infrastructure.

Ellen Dale
Orinda

Editor:

There are two parts of the proposed Moraga Adobe plan which could do extreme damage to all of Orinda.

The first of these is the hazard of golf balls falling on the Adobe development from the adjacent elevated Moraga Country Club Golf Course. The capacity of these golf balls to cause injury is shown by the fact that the Claxtons, the former owners of the Adobe property, had to move their horses to another location because of their injuries from falling golf balls. The Developers have suggested planting trees as a solution for the golf ball problem. This might work 30 years from now but is useless in the present.

To have adequate golf ball protection a 50-foot high net must be installed by the Developers and maintained by them for the next 30 years.

Keep in mind that one of these falling golf balls hitting the top of the head of a young child could paralyze him for life. Since the City of Orinda allowed this known hazard, the City would be responsible for the cost of caring for the child, and this cost could bankrupt Orinda.

A second major hazard from the proposed development is that there is only one entry and exit road in the development and the development is on slide-prone land. An earthquake would very likely close the road of the development which would keep the fire trucks out and the residents trapped inside. If, as is likely, a fire breaks out, not only would the development burn but the immediately adjacent brush-covered hillside would ignite. This could quickly become a fire storm such as the Great Oakland Fire and burn down all of Orinda since the brush has never been cut on the western hillsides of Orinda.

The solution to this problem is to require a second road into the development. This road could connect to existing adjacent Dolores Way, a public road. The Developer should make this connection.

Clyde Vaughn
Orinda

Editor:

On December 9, 2010, I mailed the following letter to Ms. Kathy Foulkes, Director, East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). Since Ms. Foulkes has not responded to my letter, I thought perhaps I could use your publication to direct my questions to all EBMUD Directors and to appropriate management. At the same time, other water users and rate payers may be interested in EBMUD's response:

Dear Ms. Foulkes:

I read "East Bay Water 2010" with considerable interest. It contains 21 pages of information about water conservation, water transfers, water desalination, water banking, water recycling, water partnering, and . . . Have I left anything out?

Twenty-one pages of information about how to address potential and probable water shortages . . . but not one word about our water user overage.

One can only guess at the tens of millions of dollars EBMUD will spend testing and trying and experimenting and probing for ways to stretch our water supplies. My guess would be that for less than one thousand dollars EBMUD directors could write letters to various federal and state executives and legislators pointing out that much of the costly testing, trying, experimenting, and probing you will be doing would be unnecessary if America and California would end their perpetual and accelerating population growth.

If America's population doubles and redoubles in this century as it virtually did in the last century, odds are good that California's and Northern California's populations will also double and redouble. Should that happen in EBMUD's territory, how far will all the costly testing, trying, experimenting, and probing take us?

Isn't it time for some brave directors in some embattled water district somewhere to stand up and tell it like it is? Does EBMUD have such brave directors?

Cordially,
Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Editor:

The Lamorinda community lost a treasure, with the passing of Diane Hurst. She had art exhibits and sold artwork, flowers and produce from her little farm on Saint Marys Road. My condolences to all of her friends and family. She will be missed.

Bruce R. Peterson
Lafayette

Join our Public Forum

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.



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