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Lafayette

Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, June 13, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Planning Commission

Monday, June 20, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Design Review

Monday, June 13, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center
in the Arts & Science Discovery
Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Lafayette:

www.ci.lafayette.ca.us

Chamber of Commerce:

www.lafayettechamber.org



Police Report

Rude Wake-up Call, 5/24/11 A woman woke up to find an intruder hovering over her in her residence. He punched her in the face; she called police. He grabbed her keys and fled in her car, taking her cell phone and \$1,000 in cash with him.

One DUI Wasn't Enough? 5/28/11 Police running a DMV check during a routine traffic stop uncovered two outstanding warrants (\$25,000 each) on the driver. The charges were DUI related, and the suspect had a suspended license. The suspect was booked at Martinez Detention Facility, where, presumably, there will be no more driving.

The Best Intentions, 5/24/11 An octogenarian sent three checks totaling over \$63,000 to a phone scam artist before reporting the incidents to police.

Who Let the Dogs Out? 5/28/11 Police from Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda were involved in responding to a burglar alarm set off on Canyon Road in Lafayette. They shortly responded to a second trespassing in the area and called in the dogs. Sheriff's department K-9 team failed to find the suspect, described as a twenty-something male.

Bitter Coffee Break, 5/29/11 After stopping at a coffee shop, a woman searched to find the wallet she thinks she dropped in the Whole Foods parking lot. She didn't find the wallet, which was said to contain her driver's license, credit cards and \$2,000 in Nordstrom gift cards. Sounds like a stakeout in Walnut Creek might be in order...



Lafayette City Budget Balanced

By Cathy Tyson

This year's Lafayette budget is looking just a little rosier than last year for a number of reasons. Due to improving retail sales – apparently residents really are shopping Lafayette first – General Fund revenues have increased over \$200,000 from last year; throw in no pay increases or cost of living adjustments for city employees and keeping actual expenses below projected amounts and it adds up to a balanced budget with an extra \$223 to spare.

The next fiscal year could be even brighter, according to City Manager Steven Falk, “We have seen encour-

aging signs of growth in the local economy that we believe will increase Lafayette's sales tax receipts by as much as \$300,000 next year.”

The City's savings account is nothing short of spectacular - reserves are projected to be \$9.8 million – the equivalent to 86% of General Fund expenditures, substantially over the City Council's target of 50%. That's like a family having over ten months worth of salary earning interest in the bank. “The five year forecast suggests that by continuing to budget conservatively and control expenses, the City will continue to meet its reserve targets in

the foreseeable future,” said Falk.

Cuts made in December, the middle of the budget cycle, helped keep the overall budget balanced. The biggest savings came from eliminating the canine officer position and trimming city support for the Art and Wine Festival and the Reservoir Run, eliminating the Planning Intern position and stretching out the time between landscape maintenance along with adjusting fees for use of city ball fields.

Support of the banner program was on the chopping block and a request by the Town of Moraga for

Lafayette to pay a share of the parking cost at the Skate Park was discussed at a recent City Council meeting. “It's a safety issue,” said Jay Ingram of Moraga Parks and Recreation. He asked both Lafayette and Orinda to pitch in 25% each of the cost to pave the gravel parking area.

Although the skate park is located in Moraga, all three Lamorinda municipalities shared the cost of construction and on-going maintenance. The Town of Moraga is now asking Orinda and Lafayette to contribute 25% (or \$67,000) each, while Moraga picks up 50% of the cost of paving.

Playing Ball Just Got More Expensive

By Cathy Tyson



Lafayette Little League players Ross Ney, Jack Larsen and Michael O'Donnell pose after winning a game at Buckeye Fields. Photo C. Tyson

Come July, it's going to cost more to play ball in Lafayette. Since the last fee increase for field users was more than ten years ago, and a recent analysis showed fees were \$20,000 short of covering their share of maintenance costs, users will soon be asked to pitch in a bit more.

The \$20,000 shortage is a problem, since City Manager Steven Falk took a close look at all city expenses and recommended cutting \$500,000 in annual general fund expenses as part of the 2010-2011 mid-year budget review. Presuming flat revenue and increasing police costs, all city departments, including Parks Trails and Recreation, were instructed to eat their fair share of the budget-cut pie.

Jennifer Russell, Parks Trails and Recreation Director, held four meetings and invited all of the sports field users to help look for a solution, “We had a good back and forth discussion, although we didn't always agree. We

looked at established policies and actual maintenance and utility costs,” she said.

Parks Trails and Recreation Commission Vice-Chair Mark Poole explained that everyone understood the need for the fee increase, “The question was how much and on whom?”

It's complicated dividing up a limited resource among disparate user groups, while keeping in mind the need for adequate field time. A number of factors were analyzed: established fee policies and the existing preferential use agreement with Lafayette Little League, a variety of league sizes – some are substantially larger than others – whether an organization is completely run by parent volunteers, and more. One important component is the quantity of Lafayette children who play in Lafayette Little League – their parents are paying taxes to the city.

Soccer and Lacrosse fees are already slightly higher than baseball

and softball because of greater wear and tear of the fields, but their fees will rise too.

There's a substantial range of field use time, for example Lafayette Little League uses Buckeye Fields on St. Mary's Road for approximately 2,500 hours per year, while Lafayette Moraga Youth Association (LMYA) soccer only uses it for 275 hours. The Community Park fields are also heavily used by Lafayette Little League at 1,500 hours, while the Lamorinda Baseball Academy uses them for only for 184 hours.

At a recent City Council meeting Randy Russo, Board Member of LMYA said, “Field cost is our biggest expense. We went through the numbers, and we can handle an increase now – but a future increase will be very difficult.” He added that LMYA is a recreational league; they strive to keep prices reasonable.

Maintenance and utilities for the entire Lafayette Community Park costs \$129,000 per year, most of that, \$107,700, is spent on maintenance and utilities at the sports fields, and

supporting facilities. Buckeye Fields' costs are similar, with maintenance and utilities of \$122,300; \$101,200 of that is spent on upkeep of the sports fields.

All of the various versions of plans were weighed to arrive at an hourly rate that could be applied uniformly. The new fee schedule divides user groups into categories: established seasonal leagues with over 75% Lafayette residency, Club or Select teams, daily camps, clinics and tournaments, then finally hourly short-term rentals.

In the old system Lafayette Little League and Lafayette Soccer paid a set amount per team; starting in July, instead of the set fee, it will cost Lafayette Little League \$8 per hour per field; Lafayette Soccer Leagues will pay \$15 per hour per field. Club and Select teams that had paid \$8 to \$12 per hour per field in the past will start paying \$20 - \$25 per field, per hour. Finally day camps and clinics will see their rates go from \$115 per day for baseball and softball to \$180, with similar increases for soccer and lacrosse.

What's going on with the Bike Park?

The long anticipated Lafayette Bike Park is in a holding pattern while government agencies are doing lengthy reviews as part of the required permit process. The City of Lafayette Parks Trails and Recreation Department has been working with bike park consultants, Hilride, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Army Corps of Engineers along with a biological consultant to ensure the proposed bike park is in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and state and federal permit regulations. “We appreciate your patience while we work through this process. We are committed to complying with the environmental regulations and creating a safe and fun bike riding facility for people of all ages and skill levels in the community of Lafayette,” said Jennifer Russell, Parks Trails and Recreation Director.

Sally Holmes Explosion at Mt. Diablo Nursery and Garden



Although they were pruned down to canes this winter, these Sally Holmes roses, planted by shop owners Garth and Marcia Jacober, are in full bloom near the rear of the store. Photo C. Tyson

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