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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I am writing regarding the City Ventures proposed development on Country Club Drive. Now that the story poles are entirely erected, at least on the exterior of the property, a couple of design defects can be better visualized.

1. This is a development of significant size which will affect the immediate neighborhood forever. Developments of this kind as a real estate matter provide for resident parking. This development does not adequately address parking. The solution as proposed and accepted by the town is to widen Country Club Drive, thereby having all overflow parking on the street. Well designed projects do not inflict their project limitations on their neighbors: I.e. their overflow parking is restricted to their own property. See the design of Camino Peral and adjacent streets as examples.
2. The setback rule as approved at some level for the town is to interpret the setbacks for the adjacent properties (beginning with the fire station) to be determined by the edge of their parking lot; not the edge of the improvements on the property. This is not consistent with standard real estate practice. For instance, if this logic were continued all residential development in Moraga could be construed to virtually be the edge of the property line, as adjacent properties have driveways and often expanded parking pads for RV's, etc.
3. The justification by the town to proceed for this development as designed has been to point to the Moraga Specific Plan, which permits high density construction at this site. Experts have claimed that the intent was to anticipate another office building or a retirement home so as to avoid parking and traffic issues with the design so-far approved.

To be consistent with the plan however, the minimum number of units on this site would be 36.76: reasonably meaning "37," as was pointed out the to Design Review Board by the town's own consultant during a public meeting. In other words, the town is employing "discretion" to restrict the number to 36.

The design review board's plan for this site is an abuse of their discretion. If you can erect 36 units instead of 37, why can you not simply erect 25 units, the number which would make the development consistent with the neighborhood and substantially resolve parking, aesthetic and traffic issues?

So far, the problem here is not City Ventures, who have acted honorably to find some compromise. It is the town of Moraga, its politics and other things.

Gerry Tanner

Moraga

Editor:

My wife and I gratefully thank the many people of Lamorinda that have endured the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge and those who donated for ALS research. Our son Jean-Pierre Lescure (Campolindo 1984) , an avid outdoor person became a victim of ALS at 46 and now, two years later, is faced with having to use a wheelchair for any mobility. The worst is yet to come, greater difficulty with speech, swallowing and breathing, then total paralysis. As the parents of a ALS victim, it is very difficult to watch your child face a dreadful death.

It is most likely a cure or even medication, if found by research now, will be too late for Jean-Pierre but your donations will eventually benefit someone else. Keep in mind that you do not have to endure the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge to make a donation.

Keith and Suzeline Lescure

Moraga

Editor:

Deafening silence.

Over our long holiday weekend Israel announced it has seized almost 1000 acres of land inhabited and farmed by Palestinians for over 1000 years.

The UN, Britain, France, and Egypt have all condemned this, the largest Israeli land grab in 30 years. The US has expressed "concern" but continues to give Israel over 8 million dollars each day in military aid

We could use that money right here in America creating jobs and repairing our crumbling infrastructure. Instead we are enabling the merciless killing of more innocent civilians and the destruction of Gazan homes and infrastructure, estimated at 6 billion dollars.

As of this writing, not one US Senator or Congressman has even commented on the seizure - a gross and inhumane violation of international law. Apparently their fear of the Israeli lobby trumps their interest in humanitarian justice.

Our silence is deafening and can only serve to lower our standing in the international community. Money can buy elections but it should not be allowed to undermine our commitment to freedom, liberty and humanitarian justice.

Forrest J. Cioppa
Moraga

Editor:

The community social engineers seem incapable of allowing ordinary folks to just enjoy any available life simplifications - especially, those not tapping our pocket books (or adding new unwanted home chores).

The latest such intrusion - banning plastic grocery bags! Presumably, basing this latest campaign on a TV show of masses of bags floating on/contaminating an ocean surface somewhere.

What is ignored is the great utility of such containers. Not only for groceries, but a wide range of other products. And most important, the after market utility the bags provide in numerous home applications. Applications, which virtually no brown paper bag counterpart, can possibly satisfy.

In this reader's home, the little cotton plastic bag storage bag in the kitchen, is visited numerous times daily to "get a plastic", for some immediate need. Needs, that no brown paper bag can accommodate. E.g., holding fruit freshly picked from our home orchard, collecting trash for the brown recycle waste barrel (and its daily accumulation of waste for the weekly collection) - plus of course. transporting perishables to the "blue waste barrel". And finally, holding surplus clothing for curbside charitable organization collections.

The fact that our kitchen cotton bag (used to collect the bags), often is always near empty - is constant proof of the secondary use the bags enjoy, once home with store purchases.

Donald Lively
Lafayette

ORINDA ELECTION

Editor:

Please support Hillary Weiner for a seat on the OUSD school board on November 4th.

With children in school together for the past five years, we have admired Hillary's keen interest in education issues and her commitment to school volunteerism, most recently serving as president of the Glorietta Parent's Club. Hillary is a steady and thoughtful leader who thinks objectively and analytically. She understands that effective leadership requires an inclusive approach to building relationships with the school community and its many partners.

As a member of the board, Hillary will respect and value the views of her fellow board members and the governance process. Hillary's temperament and attitude will enable her to find common ground and build bridges on controversial and contentious issues. She will govern pragmatically and with an appreciation for the limited human and financial resources available to the district. Most

importantly, Hillary's overriding concern will always be the best interests of all OUSD students. Our family will have three children in Orinda schools for years to come. We hope that our children will be fortunate enough to have Hillary serving on the OUSD school board.

Jason and Jennifer Lurie
Orinda

Editor:

While the majority of Orindans were busy tending to their families and careers, our City Council intentionally allowed Eden Housing's Monteverde Apartments to exceed the 35 foot height limit delineated in our General Plan. In case you were wondering if this apartment building would solve a problem for Orinda's empty nesters, Eden is legally prohibited from giving preferential treatment to current Orinda residents in the renter selection process. I encourage you to look at this structure on 2 Irwin Way (across the street from Safeway) and decide for yourself if it conforms to the semi-rural character of Orinda described in our General Plan.

Meanwhile, Fountainhead Montessori Preschool, a respected and popular fixture in Orinda, had undergone an extensive Planning Commission review of its plan to relocate to the former Phair's building site. The plan was approved by a 5-2 vote, with the then-chairman one of the no votes. This approval was appealed by an Orinda resident and City Council overturned the Planning Commission's decision. A Public Records Act request by concerned citizens revealed numerous e-mails involving a developer and several Orinda decision makers regarding a future, large commercial development on this very property, including recommendations on raising the height limit without revising the General Plan so as to increase profitability.

This is all very consistent with the 4th Cycle Housing Element adopted by City Council in 2013 after considerable public turmoil due to its blatant pro-developer verbiage which remained in the final draft despite Council and Staff's pledge to remove it.

If you believe that a small group of influential insiders should not determine Orinda's future, that issues such as crime are more important than encouraging high-rise development, and that our semi-rural character is precious, please join me in voting for only Eve Phillips in the City Council Election.

Bruce London
Orinda

Editor:

If Lionel Ritchie was an Orinda voter ... he would be changing his tune.

Once. Twice. Three times a lady!
But a 20-year rule seems a bit shady.
The fourth bore is done.
It's time to have fun.
So why are you really running again, Amy?

Is dispensing millions as MTC Chair,
Really the reason that you care?
Or is it sidekicks, Baltodano and Orr,
Who need your coattails to stay on board?
Thank you, Ms Worth, but no more can one bear.

With libraries and tunnels, you did shine.
It's your development actions that fall out-of-line.
With high-density housing, Montessori, and such,
Semi-rural Orinda finds that you've grown out-of-touch.
For Miramonte's own, Eve Phillips, it's time.

Owen Murphy

Orinda

Editor:

The 2014 election for city council is the most important city council election since Orinda became an incorporated city 30 years ago. Orinda was such a great place to live then. Residents did not have to worry that our city government would pass regulations that would destroy our semi-rural environment. Now, we have Monteverde towering over North Orinda because our building height limits were ignored by the current City Council. What's next? Increased high-density development is taking hold with our current City Council members, affecting every aspect of our community. Ask yourself: Is living in Orinda better or worse than four, eight, or 10 years ago? For the city's residents, a more appealing Orinda is vital. Eve Phillips and Linda Delehunt, both candidates for the Orinda City Council in 2014, will help assure that Orinda -- again -- becomes a great place to live. They will support what the people want, not the interests of big development.

Orinda needs new leadership.

Ms. Phillips and Ms. Delehunt, if elected to the city council, will protect the quality of Orinda's schools, help end the intolerable parking and traffic conditions that bedevil the downtown area, protect residents' views of the scenic hills, fix the roads, and enforce Orinda's 35-foot height limit for buildings.

When casting your ballot for city council, please vote for Eve Phillips and Linda Delehunt. The city you protect will be your own.

Sandra Wooten
Orinda

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