

Breaking Ground for the Diablo Vista Pumping Plant



Photo C. Tyson

Christmas Eve was the first day of work for crews from the East Bay Municipal Utility District who started construction of what will be the Diablo Vista Pumping Plant. Orange cones diverted traffic and a row of trees in front of Blodgett's Abbey Carpet were removed. Crews also began a process called "pot-holing" to find the location of utilities under the street. Drivers looking to park along the street should wear comfortable shoes, as parking is restricted on both sides of the street, and they may have a long walk to an available parking space.

Pictured above are new drain pipes that will be installed underground that reroute the existing storm drain to round the corner into Mt. Diablo Court instead of cutting diagonally through the lot. This is the first

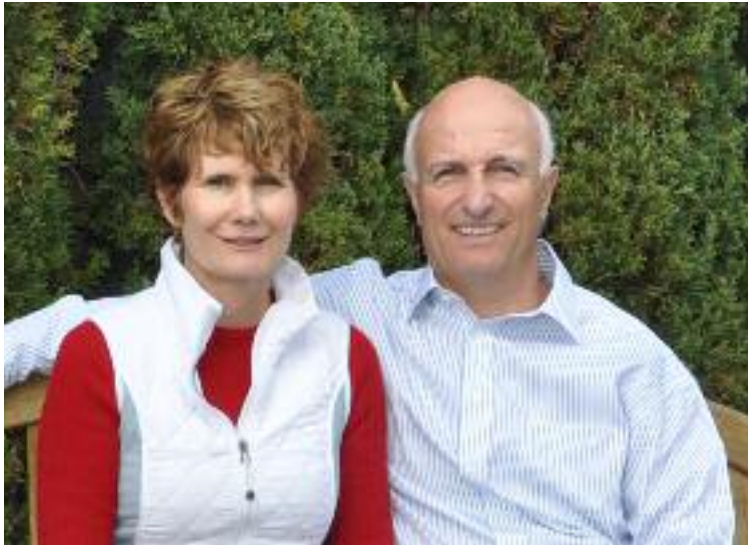
step of a long project, slated to be complete in the fall of 2017, which will ultimately replace the aging Diablo Vista Pumping Plant and associated pipes with a new facility at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Mt. Diablo Court. Later on this year, motorists can expect more cones and traffic diversions as the hefty 30-inch diameter water pipeline is installed.

Despite the rain, the project has moved fairly smoothly so far and the utility has responded to neighbors' line of sight concerns. "The city, EBMUD and the contractor met and decided to remove the corner fencing. We also moved a portable sign warning eastbound drivers of cross traffic closer to the intersection," said EBMUD Community Affairs Representative Michelle Blackwell.

— C. Tyson

Lamorinda Weekly Publishers Named Lafayette's Business Persons of the Year

By Lou Fancher



Wendy and Andy Scheck

Sometimes, the way to break out of the box in the business world is to stay contained within tight parameters.

Putting that counterintuitive practice into play, Andy and Wendy Scheck, owners of the locally-owned, independent Lamorinda Weekly newspaper, are the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce's 2016 Business Persons of the Year. A dinner Jan. 29 at the Lafayette Park Hotel and Spa will honor their contributions and include a State of the City address by Mayor Mark Mitchell and the introduction of the 2016 Chamber Board of Directors.

Keeping a tight watch on expansion, never sacrificing quality for profit, and an unflinching dedication to core staff have been the Schecks' continued goal, and print – on old-fashioned paper – remains their primary objective.

Lafayette City Manager Steve Falk recalls how virtually no news was published about the bustling city during the year before the weekly launched in March 2007, as more media outlets shifted to the Internet. He wondered how an un-informed citizenship could behave responsibly. "America's founders understood this; that's why they added the first constitutional amendment guaranteeing a free press," Falk writes in an email. "For there to be good government, it is critical that every resident have access to trustworthy news."

But powering social change, performing the role of independent watchdog, uncovering corruption and inspiring the public with uplifting stories demands more than just freedom, newsprint or an open

mouth. Discernment, honesty, investigation and reflection – and compassion, a characteristic not often used in conjunction with the press – lend credibility and spark loyalty. "They say the darkest hour is right before the dawn, and the Schecks arrived at just the right time to fill the local news void left by the Internet revolution," Falk says. "Lafayette and all of Lamorinda is better off as a result."

Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson says the Schecks have been nominated for the award numerous times and he told them to let people know their news. "There are a lot of people who really appreciate what they do," he says.

Despite some hesitation – even resistance – to "tooting their own horn" in their paper, the Schecks are justifiably proud to be planning their 10th anniversary year coming in 2017. They credit their success to a business model based on their original concept and principles. And without longtime contributors – former editor Lee Borrowman, current editor Jennifer Wake, senior staff writers Cathy Tyson and Sophie Braccini and others – the Schecks say the Lamorinda Weekly would not have achieved their final goal: a 100 percent focus on editorial content.

Although it pains her to do so because she is the paper's primary sales force, Wendy says they occasionally turn advertisers down. "We were going to expand last year. We had a lot of advertising and the pages were getting full. We started to do a second press run, add more sections, create more content.

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Avg. Days on Market	26	16	21	17	14	18
Sold Over Asking Price	16	16	28	33	32	24
Sold Under Asking Price	6	8	15	9	12	17
Sold at Asking Price	7	6	10	4	3	2
Avg. Sales Price	\$892,000	\$1,032,940	\$1,166,000	\$1,243,187	\$1,488,000	\$1,601,111
Avg. Sales Price Per Sq. Ft.	\$538	\$575	\$517	\$525	\$441	\$498

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