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Letters to the editor

Vote for Measure L

For over 50 years our Family has lived and done business in Lafayette. Our children attended Lafayette public schools, some of the best in California in spite of being substantially under funded by the State when compared to California's large urban school districts. Measure L will provide the Lafayette School District with the funds necessary to prevent deep cuts to programs in science, math, reading, technology and language arts. Measure L gives our Lafayette Community an opportunity to step-in and provide a stable, locally controlled source of funding for our public schools. Measure L provides our children the education they need to be successful in this changing world. Let's protect our Lafayette public schools and vote yes on Measure L.

Connie Collier
Lafayette

Protect our schools with Measure L

High quality public schools contribute to the vitality and success of any community. Our family recognizes how important Lafayette's great schools are to our town. Our children, and now our grandchildren, have experienced these benefits firsthand. We have been involved with and supportive of our schools for many years. They are the heart of Lafayette. I admire the lengths to which our school district leaders and teachers have gone to in order to protect our classrooms from being negatively impacted by insufficient state funding for communities like ours. Without raising more local revenue for our schools, our district will face additional cuts that will directly threaten the high-quality education we have come to expect in Lafayette. Our community cannot let that happen. I am proud to support Measure L because it will provide funds that will have a lasting impact in the classroom. Measure L will help retain our first-rate teachers and keep award-winning programs like music, art and STEM thriving. All money will stay right here in Lafayette, under our local control, and will directly benefit the students at Burton Valley, Happy Valley, Lafayette Elementary, Springhill, and Stanley. All of us can play a role in ensuring that our great schools stay great. Every vote matters. Please join me and my family and vote YES for Measure L for Lafayette Schools and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same.

Janet Cronk
Lafayette

Why Lot 66 should be denied once and for all

At recent public hearings (1/6/20, 2/3/20)), the Lafayette Planning Commission failed to do its job in regards to the Lot 66 building application by Richard Holt.

Lot 66 has a road running through the middle of it.

Lot 66 is encumbered by a public trail easement and a private easement held by 22 property owners.

Lot 66's plans exceed the maximum non permeable coverage in asphalt/house footprint.

Lot 66's plans exceed the maximum 50 cubic yards of allowable excavation

Lot 66's plans exceed the 17' height maximum for a hillside home by more than double.

Lot 66 development would require multiple variances that are so extraordinary, they would be granting "special privilege" to the applicant.

City Attorney Mala Subramanian has recommended-with no precedent- that the city should "continue to process the application" because it cannot enforce a private easement. Even so, we are still left with a highly constrained lot. The commission members have spent hours at the hearings debating massing and siting issues without first addressing the buildability of Lot 66.

Lot 66 was never intended to be developed. In 2008, the Lafayette Planning Commission and City Council denied the application and Mr. Holt's appeal of those applications. Holt's response was to sue the City in 2010. He lost. Yet here we are a decade later being forced to fight Mr. Holt's greed once again. The remaining issues include but are not limited to:

1. Building on a drainage swale
2. Elimination of privacy for the adjacent neighbor whose four bedroom windows would sit 6' from Holt's new driveway
3. Removal of 12 protected redwood trees, pine trees and bay trees that stabilize the steep hillside and provide privacy
4. An imposing 34.5 feet high structure that would tower over the neighbor's home and does not fit in with the character of the neighborhood of one-story homes.

Mr. Holt is a former Lafayette Planning Commissioner Chair and should know better. Holt was the realtor when Petar Jakovina purchased Lot 66 decades ago. Lot 66's only purpose was to create access to develop the Sessions Road and Northridge Lane subdivisions up hill. Holt obtained Lot 66 for a song after Jakovina died. Lot 66's 2019-2020 tax valuation is a mere \$25K with annual taxes of only \$630. A true buildable lot would be valued much higher.

Why should you care? If approved, this project will set a dangerous precedent allowing future development of non-buildable lots through a series of ill-advised variances. Privacy and property values will suffer. Attend the March 3, 2020 public hearing to show our city that no one, including Mr. Holt, can skirt established building regulations.

Pamela Swarts
Lafayette

Student support for Measure L

My name is Brendan Connelly, and I'm a freshman at Acalanes High School. For the past 10 years, I have benefited immensely from the education I have received at Lafayette's public schools. Lafayette schools are full of some of the highest caliber teachers available.

However, we, as a community, risk losing some of our best teachers because of budget pressure. Many of our teachers could, because of how proficient they are, do very well at other jobs. In fact, my math teacher this year has a doctorate, but she chooses to stay and teach at Acalanes instead of at a college or at a higher-paying private sector job.

The Lafayette School District has been making budget cuts for the last three years. When I was in 6th grade, I had an excellent math teacher with an education from U.C. Berkeley. Her enthusiasm for math really inspired me. However, she was the youngest and newest math teacher at Stanley Middle School. Because of the budget cuts, she had to be laid off, even though she was one of the best teachers I ever had. Now, three years later, my sister is in 6th grade and I am disappointed she can't have the same teacher with the same spirit that I had.

While some may think Measure L does not benefit them and is not necessary, it is more important than ever. For people who don't have children in public schools anymore, Lafayette is still renowned for the quality of its public schools. We have good schools which produce very successful students. So, even if someone living in Lafayette couldn't care less about the quality of education, the quality of the public schools is what makes living in Lafayette so desirable and elusive. It is the reason housing prices remain so high.

As a student, I want to make it clear how critical it is for Measure L to pass. If more budget cuts become necessary, more teachers like my 6th-grade math teacher will have to leave. It is crucial that this measure passes.

Brendan Connelly
Lafayette

Measure M maintains Moraga's quality education

Almost 40 years ago, a group of concerned parents came together to begin to address the inadequacy of state funding for Moraga's public schools by establishing an education foundation. In the years since its inception, the need to privately fundraise to bridge the gap between what the state provides, and the real cost of educating our children, has not changed. If an education foundation could solely bridge that gap it would have already been accomplished. Unfortunately, education costs continue to rise and outpace the revenue required to fund experienced teachers, academic and student support programs, manageable class sizes, and libraries (to name a few). Like many in Moraga, my husband and I moved here specifically for the quality public schools, which in turn support strong property values and a vibrant community. A YES vote to support Measure M is a vote to renew a stable source of locally controlled funding to protect the quality education our children deserve and maintain one of Moraga's greatest assets.

Heather Davis
President
Moraga School District Governing Board

Vote Yes on M - Moraga's

Schools Are the Heart of Our Town

There is no denying that Moraga's schools are fundamental to our Town's strength and desirability. By keeping our schools strong, we keep our property values strong.

That's why, for nearly 30 years, our community has generously supported our schools with voter-approved, locally controlled funding to attract and retain outstanding teachers and protect excellent core academic programs. Local funding has been integral to keeping our schools among the best in the Bay Area and State. It's also why it is imperative that we vote Yes on Measure M this March. Measure M renews an expiring source of local funding, protecting our schools from \$1 million in deep cuts. If Measure M fails, teacher layoffs and class size increases are assuredly on the horizon.

Voting Yes on M renews this funding at the current rate with modest annual inflation adjustments. The inflation adjustment is modest - it can't exceed 48 cents per month in 2021 - and allows Moraga's schools to keep pace with our neighbors and the cost of providing quality educational programs for students, without overburdening local taxpayers.

All money raised by Measure M will be controlled locally, only support our elementary and intermediate schools and cannot be taken away by the State. It will allow our schools to continue funding for effective science, technology, engineering, math, arts and music programs, maintain manageable class sizes and attract and retain the best qualified teachers. It's also critical to keeping school libraries open and protecting student safety.

Strict fiscal accountability - including an independent Citizens' Oversight Committee and annual public audits

- are built directly into Measure M to ensure that every penny is spent as promised. Legally, Measure M cannot fund administrator salaries or benefits - all funds go directly to the classroom.

Moraga's schools have relied on local funding since 1992 because the State has repeatedly failed to adequately fund our schools and continues to fall short. The need will not go away and we can't rely on Sacramento.

Measure M is the only solution to secure our Town's legacy of supporting its great local schools. Please join us in voting Yes on M.

Susan Sperry, 2018 Moraga Citizen of the Year & 67-year Moraga Resident

Dr. Eric Axelrode, Moraga Business Owner

Fred Weil, 2019 Moraga Citizen of the Year & 47-year Moraga Resident

Larry Jacobs, Chair, Moraga School District Citizens' Oversight Committee

Sue Olsen, Moraga Realtor & 2018 Moraga Chamber Business of the Year

Gary DeWeese, Retired Assistant Treasurer, University of California Regents & 40-year Moraga Resident

Kathy Ranstrom, Former President, Moraga School Board & 45-year Moraga Resident

Brett Lorie, Moraga School District Teacher & Parent

Teresa Onoda, Former Mayor, Town of Moraga & 28-year Moraga Resident

Kitty Stephens, CPA, Moraga School District Fiscal Advisory Committee Member & 15-year Moraga Resident

Yes on Measure J

We can all agree that we have to do something to reduce traffic congestion and improve transit in our community. That's why we ask you to join us and other elected leaders across Contra Costa in supporting Measure J on the March ballot.

Passage of Measure J will directly improve traffic flow and provide congestion relief throughout Lamorinda.

The projects identified for funding in Measure J were decided upon by people in our communities and are the right solution, right now for our traffic problems.

For Lamorinda, the new Measure J funding will:

- Increase our annual transportation funds for paving and maintaining Lamorinda roads to allow Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda to maintain roads at a high level

- Reduce congestion along Highway 24 with improvements to the old bores of the Caldecott Tunnel and auxiliary lanes

- Improve traffic flow on major roads like Camino Pablo, Moraga Way, Pleasant Hill Road, Deer Hill Road, Moraga Road and Mt. Diablo Boulevard

- Relieve congestion, ease bottlenecks and improve local access along the I-680 corridor

- Fund a bicycle route from the Lafayette Moraga Trail to the BART station and implement improvements along Pleasant Hill Road to reduce peak hour delays

- Provide better access from home to BART and back again.

- Double funding for Lamorinda School Bus Program to reduce congestion around schools

Approval of Measure J will also ensure that Contra Costa can compete for hundreds of millions of dollars in matching funds from the state and federal government - funds that we can use locally to make travel faster and more predictable.

And all Measure J funds stay local. . . they cannot be "grabbed" by the State.

To learn more, visit www.friendsofcontracosta.org

We deserve the transportation improvements Measure J will bring.

Please join us and vote YES on Measure J.

Teresa Geringer, Council Member, City of Lafayette

Amy Worth, Vice Mayor, City of Orinda

Yes on Measure L

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has unanimously voted to support Measure L. Measure L will help bridge the gap between what California provides to our district and what it really costs to give our children a meaningful education. Community support and business engagement is a critical factor that continues to keep our local schools achieving at such a high level. Until California figures out the value of properly funding great teachers, facilities, elective classes, arts, and science across all schools in our state we will continue to be at a disadvantage. Passing reasonable parcel taxes from time to time and supporting Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE) is therefore necessary.

The Measure L ask of \$290 a year per parcel has a 7-year term and provides seniors the option to be exempt. The measure includes an oversight committee to audit the spending.

In addition to supporting Measure L, the Chamber believes there are many additional ways we can all contribute to the success of our Lafayette students. Volunteer, sponsor, donate, coach a team, help in a classroom. The responsibility of raising well educated students does not fall on the shoulders of our schools alone. Businesses, families of schoolchildren, and community members must all take an active role to make this work. We get just \$8,000 for each student from the State of California. We need to spend a minimum of \$12,000 on each student just to stay relevant and competitive.

Most of the fundraising our Chamber does throughout the year goes right back to our schools. We applaud our local merchants for their generosity and their willingness to stand with our schools. We need to mention that great schools and a vibrant downtown are perhaps the most important factors that keep our property values at such a high level.

We urge you to vote Yes on Measure L. Does it take a village? You bet it does!

Jay Lifson, Executive Director, Lafayette Chamber of Commerce
John McCormick, President, Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and Owner, Lamorinda Music

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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