



Published September 2nd, 2020

## Letters to the editor

Opposition to Measure R

My wife and I are residents of Wilder and are in a subset of Orinda / Lamorinda residents that are disproportionately taxed but receive somewhat lesser benefits than other residents. While we understand this is California and over-regulation and tax grabs are unfortunately the norm, it is getting out of hand particularly with our lives and livelihoods, as well as that of our neighbors, all being materially and adversely affected by the ongoing pandemic and related public safety issues.

We are staunchly against Measure R as another ill-advised, hare-brained and borderline illegal tax grab by local officials. This adds to the list of nonsensical actions around basically pimping out Wilder House for tax revenues, sloppy enforcement of the fields, an even more idiotic placement of a memory care facility on a major highway near Wilder and other tax grabs - all shenanigans that Wilder residents are gearing up to fight.

We ask that the relevant officials think things through for all residents, as opposed to focusing simply on their budget and touting their ability to stay in office.

Chris Shen

Orinda

In Consideration of Fairness

I am responding to Jim Evert's letter in the August 19, 2020, issue of this newspaper. Mr. Evert argues that people chose to live on private streets in Orinda and so it is fair that they should accept the cost of maintaining those streets personally. But what he doesn't take into consideration is that the city has not accepted any public streets since its incorporation. In this tight housing market, people are forced to buy homes where they can find them, whether they are on private streets or not. The city puts home buyers in Orinda between a rock and a hard place: it isn't just the Wilder development on which the city has forced private streets - it is any street built since 1985. Thirty percent of Orinda's streets are now private.

As far as Wilder homes go, Mr. Evert argues that they are less expensive because they are on private streets. However, in addition to the public road taxes that all Orindans pay, the city also required each Wilder homeowner to pay off a six-figure Mello-Roos bond, to pay an annual GHAD assessment, and to build the city an Arts and Garden Center, 5 playing fields, and the Red Tail Hawk Equestrian Center. The annual special assessments for their upkeep in perpetuity, and the HOA dues which fund future road repairs and maintenance, cost each homeowner in the five figures annually and continues to rise.

On the other hand, Mr. Evert's own public residential street was repaired last year at the cost of \$600,000, paid for in part by the taxes of private road residents. I think he needs to revisit the issue of "fairness."

Robert Finch

Orinda

Elect Gina Dawson for Lafayette City Council

Gina Dawson is a leader of intelligence, integrity, perseverance, and passion, who has used her excellent communication skills to effect positive change in Lafayette.

Gina cares deeply about our natural world and the safety and well-being of our entire community. As a watchdog for community safety, she co-founded Save our Trees to hold PG&E accountable on their unsubstantiated plans to remove hundreds of our heritage oaks in the name of "public safety." Through passion and perseverance, Gina leveraged this community controversy into something positive, by creating a vehicle for increased public safety. She collaboratively formed the Lafayette Gas Safety Alliance with residents, PG&E, the CPUC, and the City to improve transparency, communication, and decision making on natural resources and pipeline safety.

Our local schools have also benefited from Gina's leadership. For example, Gina successfully led fundraising and communication campaigns in the formation of Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE). For those of you who enjoyed our Lafayette farmer's market, it was Gina, who co-founded it with Sustainable Lafayette.

Gina's plans to increase low income housing opportunities in Lafayette, while protecting our open spaces. She knows that diversity and inclusivity are community strengths. When I first met Gina, I was struck by her positive and friendly attitude as well as her presence and listening abilities.

I encourage you to vote for Gina Dawson for Lafayette Community Council. A vote for Gina is a vote for a positive, healthy, and inclusive future.

Deborah Callister

Lafayette

What is fair for private roads?

Half of my road is public and gets maintained with public funds. The other half does not. I pay for the public road maintenance bonds, taxes and fees but do not get my half maintained. I am offended and dismayed by Jim Evert's letter of 8/19/2020.

Jim Evert contends that the sales price of a home is lower on a private road. The data I have seen contradict his claim. He further contends that the fees paid by the Wilder developer would have increased the price of

each home without knowing what those fees might be.

The unfairness begins because the future residents are not present at the negotiation between the city and the developer. If the new and up to code Wilder roads were public, the city would incur (almost) NO COST for about 25 years, during which time the residents would have paid 25 years of bonds, taxes and fees for public road maintenance. Surely this should entitle them to public maintenance thereafter. The newcomers to our community are getting a really bad deal because of city choices, even if they purchased "willingly". I believe that had the residents of Wilder been given a choice of paying a slightly higher sales price for a public road they would have done so.

Excluding some long paying residents IS unfair. Making private road residents pay for public road maintenance without getting their road repaved IS unfair. And making the residents of Wilder pay excessive amounts IS unfair.

I understand the attitude "it's not my road so tough" but we as a Community fund all road maintenance. We as a Community will decide what is right and what is fair. The current situation is not.

Charles Porges

A non-Wilder Orinda resident

A vote for Renata Sos

I am enthusiastically supporting Renata Sos for election to our Moraga Town Council and I encourage you to join me in voting for her on Nov. 3. Renata has served Moraga with excellence since being chosen from a field of eleven applicants to fill a vacancy on the Council in September of 2018. During these unprecedented times, we need the most experienced, stable, intelligent, and value-centered leadership possible and Renata fills that bill.

Having worked with her directly in the community, I know her deep commitment to always doing her homework on issues, to listening to all opinions and perspectives, and to making decisions that she believes are best. Renata is a collaborator and proactively reaches out. I admire her intellect and am grateful for all the years she has served as a volunteer leader in our Town- in her daughter's schools and their sports teams, as a Planning Commissioner, and now on our Town Council. Having served two terms on the Moraga School District Governing Board, I know first-hand the long hours such unpaid public service requires.

Most importantly, Renata embodies the very values that most of us hold dear and her leadership reflects those values. We are so very fortunate to live in this lovely place. My husband and I worked on incorporation along with many people who still reside here, wanting to make local decisions that reflect our desire for protected hillsides, excellent schools, outstanding and responsive emergency services, and great outdoor recreation activities, while staying firmly dedicated to fiscal responsibility.

As I see families walking or biking together during these pandemic days, I am reminded of how fortunate we are to live here. Keeping Moraga safe, strong and welcoming requires the kind of dedication Renata provides. I am grateful for all who have served on our Council over the years and especially grateful that Renata is willing to continue serving all of us.

Please visit her website ([www.RenataSos2020.com](http://www.RenataSos2020.com)) to learn more about her and then join me in casting a vote for Renata Sos for Moraga Town Council on Nov. 3.

Maridel Moulton

Moraga

Measure R Q&A

Another General Sales Tax? No Way!

I hate taxes, too. Name a country that doesn't pay for infrastructure with taxes and let's move there. Of all the property taxes we pay, the city only gets \$.07 of each dollar. If you want to start a movement to fix that, call me. Otherwise, we are stuck with a hobbled City Hall.

This is a terrible time for a tax! Covid! The Economy!

When is it a good time to tax? Covid will end someday. The economy goes up and down. Wildfires are getting worse every year. What if we don't make it through a fire season while we're waiting for better times? The city has a moral and fiduciary responsibility to engage around fire mitigation and the infrastructure.

State Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara states that insurance companies look at how well neighborhoods have hardened their homes AND how functional the infrastructure is as part of their risk assessment. While waiting for a good time to tax ourselves, our insurance gets cancelled or triples due to bad infrastructure and excess fuel just waiting to catch. Penny wise, pound foolish?

This tax is regressive

Not as regressive as a parcel tax is. Plus, groceries and prescriptions are exempt.

This tax hurts Orinda businesses

If you've been shopping in Moraga or Walnut Creek to avoid paying taxes here, you have been paying a 1% added tax there. Lafayette has no extra tax. Bet you haven't even noticed that on your receipts.

How will we know the money is spent the right way?

City council members have come through on the current general tax so far. They know that we are concerned and they are scared of losing their own homes or lives in a wildfire, too. The Orinda Firewise Council and the citizen oversight committee assigned to this tax will ride herd on this like never before. The state has been burning up all around. This is serious. This is scary. This is a problem we can make a lot better. Vote Yes on R.

Melanie Light

Orinda

Protect Orinda - Vote Yes on Measure R

Orinda needs Measure R, to introduce a new 1% Transactions and Use Tax (TUT)\* to replace the existing <% TUT, which is due to expire in 2023.

Passage of this measure will provide Orinda an estimated \$2.4 M per year, a resource the City needs to significantly reduce the city's risk of catastrophic damage due to wildfires and flooding, and to protect the recent investments made in our roads.

Recent lightning-caused wildfires and the fact that much of Orinda is in an Elevated or Extreme fire risk area, provide a very clear warning that our City must prepare for potential severe wildfires, and must take steps to reduce wildfire risk.

The failure of the storm-drain pipe under Miner Road caused a dangerous sinkhole, clearly demonstrating what can happen if we don't address very old storm drain pipes in need of repair or replacement.

In the past several years, we have invested heavily in repairing many of our roads. Most are now in very good condition, and will stay that way for a number of years. But, if we don't perform needed maintenance, they will fall apart again, and we will have wasted all the money we spent.

Measure R will provide Orinda with resources we desperately need to address these issues and will give the City flexibility to direct funds where they are most urgently needed. The mandated annual audit and the required citizens' oversight committee will assure that the funds provided are spent effectively.

\* A Transactions and Use Tax is a type of sales tax that applies not only to items sold in the city, but also to items, such as cars, major electronics, and appliances that are purchased outside the city, for use in the city.

Vote YES on Measure R.

Jud Hammon

Orinda

#### Measure R support

I support the passage of Measure R because of what I have learned about the threat to Orinda from catastrophic wildfire. Chief David Winnacker was the catalyst when he spoke to a neighborhood group about what fire scientists know about where and how a fire would be likely to start in our area: Briones, at night from a lightning source, after dry winter excess fuel buildup, with windy conditions, and CalFire strained by other fires. If that doesn't sound familiar, turn on your TV or log in. Better yet, make sure you are registered for the CWS alert system and pay attention to evacuation information.

Involvement with the Firewise Neighborhood Council has taught me that citizens in this community are eager for aggressive fire suppression. Many neighborhoods are organized to promote fuel mitigation, but we lack the resources needed to catch up to the dry fuel backlog built up over many years. Measure R will front load that effort and provide an ongoing source of funds to continue the work in the future.

The national CV-19 virus situation and the smoky sky outside my window demonstrate once again how interdependent we are. This tiny tax increase allows the community to invest in vital roads and storm drains in addition to fire prevention. The Orinda Firewise Council is committed to oversight of Measure R spending to ensure it is focused on the needs identified in the neighborhoods. This is an investment in the common good.

Dan Detzner

Orinda

#### Vote Gina Dawson for Lafayette City Council

I encourage you to vote for Gina Dawson in the upcoming City Council election.

I've known Gina for ten years. Here are a few things that I'd like you to know about her. Gina is practical and level-headed. She's an excellent manager, meaning she knows how to organize her time and get things done. And, when it comes to new information, she does her homework.

Gina's a good consensus seeker, another quality we can use more of in today's politics. That said, Gina is driven by core values of caring for people, the environment, and public education. We can count on her to make the right choices when challenging issues emerge.

It's also worth noting Gina's been endorsed by the entire sitting City Council, several former Lafayette mayors and many appointed officials, among others. With a new General Plan coming up in the next few years and with all the challenges the Pandemic is bringing to Lafayette, we'll be well served by having Gina on our city council.

You can find out more about Gina at [www.ginadawson2020.com/](http://www.ginadawson2020.com/).

Thank you for your consideration.

Rick Reed

Orinda

#### Please vote for Carl Anduri

I urge you to vote for Carl Anduri for Lafayette City Council. Carl and his family moved to Lafayette in 1980. Carl is experienced in city government and has the knowledge and compassion to effectively represent us.

He has been actively involved in our community for years and served on several task forces, the Planning Commission and the City Council. Carl has the experience and proven track record to lead our community.

As a former Planning Commissioner, I believe it is important for a Council member candidate to have served on the Planning Commission. In this capacity, one truly hears and learns the development concerns and positions of many of our residents. It is through this experience a council candidate can understand how our residents vision growth for our city. Also, as a Planning Commissioner, one becomes well versed in the planning and land use documents that guide the future growth of our city. Having this background is important since a large portion of the Council's role is to make decisions on how our City will or will not develop. Carl has the experience and ability to balance the growth needs of our community, protect our

hillsides, expand open spaces and create a vibrant, pedestrian friendly downtown.

Carl is respectful, honest, experienced, hardworking, reasonable, a thoughtful leader, and he LOVES Lafayette. These are all the necessary qualifications for an effective Council member. Please vote for Carl in November.

Patricia Curtin  
Lafayette resident for 32 years  
Former Planning Commissioner

Vote "Yes" on Measure R

As a homeowner in Orinda, I write in support of the very small 0.5% tax increase that Measure R stipulates. The measure is written as an increase of 1% because Orinda already has a sales tax of 0.5% which is set to expire, so this measure only increases what we are used to spending by 0.5%. I support this measure because of how Orinda plans to spend this money: dedicated to fire prevention and mitigation. Although as an individual homeowner I have taken steps to ameliorate fire hazards on my property, individual homeowners cannot do it alone. Through this measure, Orinda will have a continual, consistent funding source to keep our community as fire safe as possible. Moraga has already passed a measure on this issue, and it's time for Orinda to do the same. When I hear about communities being dropped from insurance policies, I worry. When I smell the smoke from nearby fires, I worry. I am so grateful that I can turn these worries into action by voting YES on Measure R. Please join in me in doing our part to keep our communities safe from wildfires. It's a small price to pay for better piece of mind.

Maggie Reeves  
Orinda

Vote for Carl Anduri for Lafayette City Council

In these challenging times the City of Lafayette is fortunate to have a person with Carl's skills and experience willing to once again serve our City as a member of the City Council. I say "once again" because it is rare that one of our citizens, having retired from public office, is willing to do it again! Carl has already served on the Council for 10 years 2002-2012. He was Mayor in 2005 and 2011.

He recently retired as president of a global network of law firms. Thank you, Carl, for returning to city government. I first met Carl when I was Mayor. We recognized early on that he was a very thoughtful problem solver. He listens carefully and respectfully. Recognizing his many skills, we wisely appointed him to serve on the Planning Commission. Subsequently he was elected to Council. Now he returns to us having added years of experience to his impressive skill set. He knows our community very well. Our citizens appreciate that Carl listens to all sides of an issue and communicates his insights clearly. He loves Lafayette. I encourage you to join me in voting for Carl Anduri for Lafayette City Council.

Judy Garvens  
former mayor of Lafayette

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Vote Jex for MOFD

As longtime residents of Moraga, my wife and I have been concerned for years about the financial ability of MOFD to expand their leadership to help Moraga and Orinda become strong FireWise communities. Under the effort of directors Jex of Moraga, and Jorgens of Orinda, the chipper program has helped many of our neighborhoods to reduce the fire risk by prioritizing prevention. We are appreciative of their leading the way. We need their continuing efforts during the next four years to finally get the job done. Without someone on the board like them, who have worked to build the financial resources, we are fearful the financial capability of the district will be weakened and unable to do the job.

William D. Wright  
Moraga

It's About Time!

I am writing to add my support for Orinda's Downtown Precise Plan [covering privately owned property] which will complement the ConnectOrinda Plan [covering City-owned property]. The planning process for both plans has been extraordinary with many community meetings and much citizen involvement. It's about time we did something about our tired-looking downtown!

Believe it or not, since Theater Square opened 25 years ago, Orinda has not seen a single new project break ground in our "commercial" districts. In addition, only two of the current 53 commercial buildings in Orinda have been renovated during that timeframe. We have work to do if we want to encourage renovations and new development. Our height and residential density limits are so outdated and restrictive they actually discourage commercial property owners from making improvement to their properties. We should support the Downtown Precise Plan now being formulated so we can address the changes that are needed to Orinda's old Objective Design Standards. We all need to get involved.

In my experience, there is more and better shopping available in the Town of Moraga. We can do better. We deserve better!

Ellen Dale  
Orinda

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