

FIRED UP CITY COUNCIL APPOINTS EMERGENCY SERVICES TASK FORCE

Almost immediately after the city incorporated forty five years ago, the Lafayette City Council had a big decision to make: whether to run its own fire department or turn it over to the Contra Costa County Consolidated Fire Protection District (“ConFire”). To inform that decision, the Council appointed a Citizens Fire Protection Study Commission which, after a lot of work, recommended that fire services be turned over to ConFire. The rationale was that a regional approach would deliver better coordinated responses, economies of scale, clear communications, improved training, and lower administrative costs.

And so it was that in late 1968 the Board of Supervisors and the Local Agency Formation Commission approved Lafayette’s request for the annexation. Effective January 1, 1969, Lafayette’s three fire stations, all of the equipment inside those stations, and each of the thirty-nine Lafayette firefighters were transferred to ConFire. The arrangement worked well for decades, with ConFire delivering excellent fire and EMS services to Lafayette’s residents via those same three stations.

Well, as that not-so-old Bob Dylan song says, “things have changed.” Over the last five years, as the Great Recession chewed its grinding course through Contra Costa’s communities, ConFire simultaneously saw its property tax revenues plunge and its pension obligations rise. The result was a big budget hole.

Since you can’t plug a hole with nothing, last November ConFire asked voters for a new tax, but it required the ever-difficult supermajority and voters didn’t go for it. Even in affluent, fire-challenged Lafayette, only 50.7% of the voters checked the yes box, and that was way short of the 66.7% threshold. The result? ConFire did what it said it would do: it closed four fire stations, includ-

ing Station 16 in western Lafayette, leaving hundreds of residents with diminished fire / EMS protection from the district to which they pay taxes.

Very soon after that closure, the nearby Moraga Orinda Fire District acknowledged that it, too, faced similar budget challenges, and so the fire chiefs from the two districts began exploring the prospect of a single jointly-funded station at or near the Lafayette/Orinda borderline. The theory was that, by co-funding a single station, rather than two stations, each district would save more than \$1M annually while pretty much maintaining existing service levels to those who live in the coverage area.

Fortuitously and somewhat unbelievably, a large parcel that lies exactly on that border, in exactly the right place along El Nido Ranch Road, was for sale at the same time, and the owner agreed to cooperate with the fire chiefs. It seemed too good to be true: an innovative, money-saving public safety consolidation that could be implemented relatively rapidly with almost no impact on service levels.

Alas, it apparently was too good to be true. After looking once again at its bleak financial picture, ConFire closed a fifth station – this one in Pittsburg – and announced that it will likely close a sixth sometime early next year. These new closures, combined with the four earlier closures, leave thousands of ConFire constituents with

reduced protection. The situation is now so bad that ConFire Chief Daryl Louder said in a public meeting that, “I have serious doubts about our ability to provide protection for our community and I have serious concerns about the safety of our personnel operating out there.”

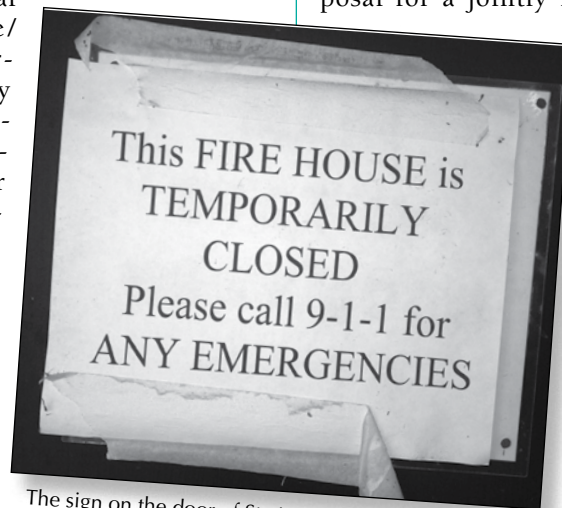
With that as a backdrop, the Board of Supervisors, when it took up the proposal for a jointly funded Lamorinda

station in May, had no stomach to commit the ~\$1M that would be needed annually. “If Station 16 were (still) open and we were certain it was going to remain open, this type of arrangement makes a lot of sense,” said Supervisor John Gioia at the time.

“But right now...it’s \$1 million more in operational costs a year than what we are spending, at a time when we’re going to have on our plate potential other cuts.” When it came down to the vote, the supervisors turned down the consolidation on a 4-1 vote, with only Supervisor Candace Anderson supporting the jointly operated station. This was bad for Lafayette – particularly those in western Lafayette who are now underserved by the fire district to which they pay property taxes.

What particularly rankles is that, with Station 16 closed, Lafayette taxpayers now receive significantly fewer services than they pay for. According to Jackie Lorrekovich, ConFire’s Chief of Administrative Services,

(continued inside)



The sign on the door of Station 16.

Emergency Services

Task Force *(continued from front)*

there are nineteen “tax rate areas” in Lafayette that deliver more than \$7.8M to ConFire’s general operating fund annually. Meanwhile, Lorrekovich’s estimate of the cost to run a fire station for a year is \$2.5M to \$2.7M. Thus, when ConFire was operating three stations in Lafayette, residents were getting services roughly equal to the taxes they paid. Now, however, Lafayette is subsidizing ConFire’s other cities by perhaps \$2M annually while receiving degraded service levels.

This, of course, didn’t sit well with the Lafayette City Council. As a result, in June, it ordered the creation of an Emergency Services Task Force to study ways to improve the delivery of fire and emergency medical services to the residents of Lafayette. One option the Task Force will certainly consider is whether the City should reverse that original 1968 Council decision, detach from ConFire, and then decide how to best use the property taxes paid by residents to deliver fire and EMS services.

Interestingly, and perhaps because of the City Council’s move to reexamine how emergency services are delivered in Lafayette, the prospect of a consolidated station has recently reemerged from its shallow grave.

In July, County supervisors reversed the decision they made just two months earlier and voted unanimously to re-open the exploration of a station partnership with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. While ConFire officials said they had sufficient capital funds to help build the station, questions about the operating funding remain. At *Vistas* press time these details were yet to be worked out.

In the meantime, however, the Lafayette City Council – still concerned about these developments – has moved forward and appointed several volunteers to serve on the Emergency Services Task Force. That group is just getting started, but will certainly continue to monitor and perhaps even shape progress on the delivery of fire and EMS services in western Lafayette.

A NEW MANZANITA ROOM

Hi. I’m sixty years old. I’m worn out.

And when it comes to going to the bathroom, I’ve got problems.

Many residents have either carpooled their kids out to the Lafayette Community Center for a summer camp program or otherwise enjoyed a class or two at the center themselves. It’s a magic place in a wonderful wooded location.



A girl and her grandfather enjoying the old Manzanita Room.

A true community treasure, the Lafayette Community Center offers many activities in what was originally called Burton School. The facility was built in the 1950’s and served as the main elementary school for Burton Valley for about thirty years. When the school district moved the elementary school to what is now called Burton Valley School on Merriewood Drive, the City acquired the campus and began planning its renovation.

Once the Community Center Master Plan was approved in the 1980’s, the city began hoarding funding to remodel the 2,800-square-foot Manzanita building that anchors the south end of the campus. Over the years, the building has been home to two kindergartens, a pre-school, city board meetings, recreation classes, the City run Camp Awesome, teen and senior events and a variety of live shows.

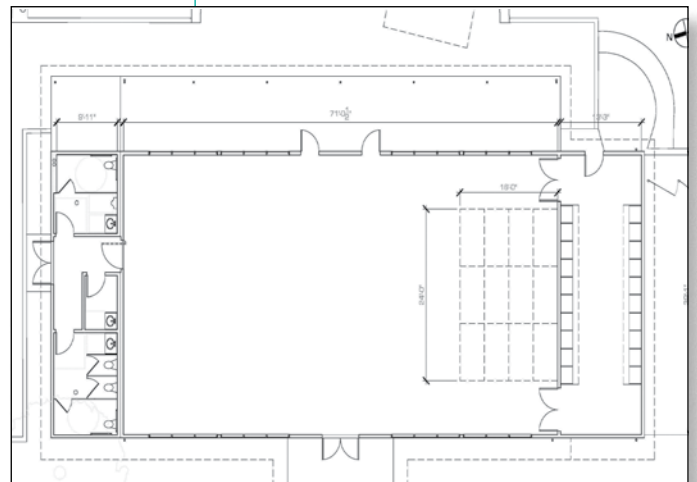
At sixty years old, the Manzanita Room

is showing its age. There is no functional air conditioning; the windows no longer provide adequate insulation; support pillars make the room nonfunctional for many activities; and there are no bathrooms for children that have drunk one too many juice boxes.

Given the age and state of the building, and the significant amount of remodeling that would be needed to make it truly useful, the Parks, Trails & Recreation Department presented three options to the City Council: a remodel and two tear-down/rebuild designs.

In June, after much deliberation, the Council decided to go with a new building that will add 850 sq. ft. to the floor area and about six feet to the ceiling height. The new building will have plenty of storage, energy-efficient lighting, new windows, a modern air conditioning system, and a beautiful back patio that overlooks Grizzly Creek. Oh – and yes! – bathrooms!

The new building is estimated to cost \$1.8 million and will be funded by park development fees, Measure WW Bond money, and a donation from the Lafayette Community Center Foundation. The Parks, Trails and Recreation Department estimates future activities will bring in \$220,000 annually. Construction is scheduled to begin in Fall 2014 with a grand opening in Summer 2015.



Floorplan for the new Manzanita Room.

CITY LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Get connected at www.lovelafayette.org

The City of Lafayette officially launched its new website on July 1 and we're pretty darned proud of it! The old homepage was more than ten years old and, while it was once the state of the art, it had definitely begun to show its age.

The new website, still located at www.lovelafayette.org, has a clean look that celebrates Lafayette's beauty. The fresh design, with its oak leaf greens, cerulean sky blues, and little accents of poppy orange, is made from the same colors that you see while taking a walk around the Lafayette Reservoir. In addition, there are lots of terrific photos that show off Lafayette as a great place to live, visit, relax, and do business.

Oh, and it's not just for official City business – it's a portal for all things Lafayette. You'll find links to the Chamber of Commerce, Town Hall Theater, the Lafayette Library and Learning

Center, schools, places to shop, transportation services, support services, recreational activities, Sustainable Lafayette, and many others.

Here are some of the brand new features you'll find at www.lovelafayette.org:

- **What's Happening in Lafayette?** Ever fear that you're missing out on something really good happening right now in Lafayette? Fear no more! There's a calendar on the homepage that describes just about anything and everything happening in Lafayette right now.
- **Manage Your Own Subscriptions.** Now you can sign up for automatic email notification of City Council and commission agendas and staff reports.
- **Local News and Hot Topics.** Want the Lafayette skinny? Sign up to receive the *City Manager's Friday*

Summary and the *Almost Daily Briefing* and you'll be well informed regarding all the local goings on. Or check out the *Hot Topics* button on the homepage to learn about the latest local *contretemps*.

- **Public Meetings.** Find current and prior agendas, staff reports, and minutes for every public meeting all on one convenient page. Just click the *Public Meetings* button on the homepage.

- **Listen Live.** Now you can listen to City Council meetings live as they occur! Woot! Click on *Public Meetings* and at the top under "Upcoming Recorded Meetings" you'll see a link that says "Meeting in Progress" for the meetings that are broadcasting live. Listen Live is available for City Council, Design Review, Planning Commission and Circulation Commission meetings.

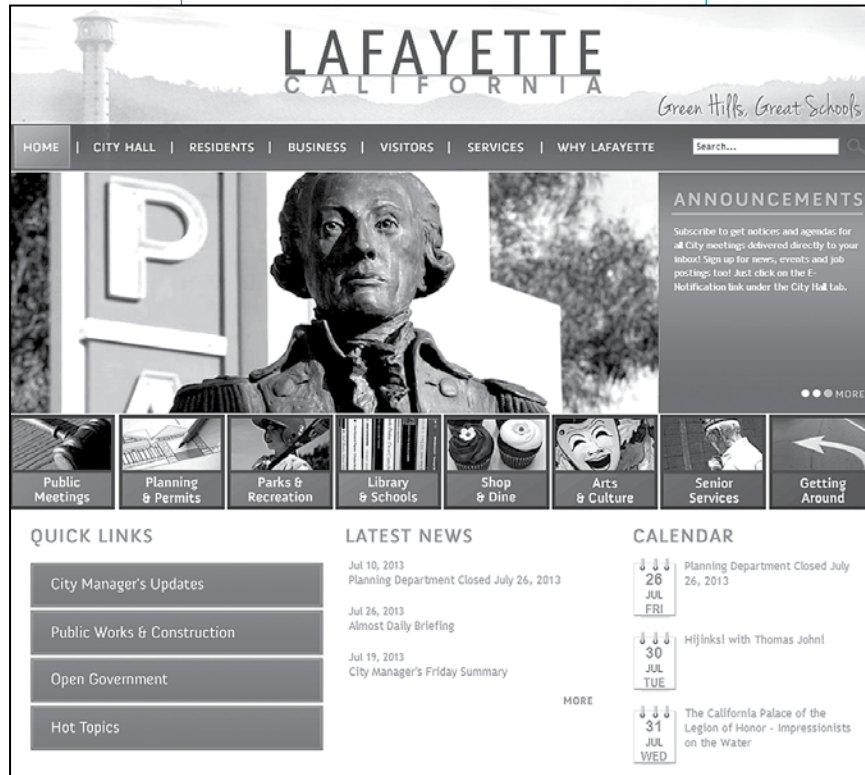
- **Community View.** This interactive Geographic Information System (GIS) map allows you to find out specific information such as zoning, flood zones, etc., for any parcel in town. To find it, go to the Map Room under the *City Hall* tab.

- **Photo Album.** Under the *Why Lafayette* tab we've added a nice collection of photos that really show off beautiful Lafayette. Feel free to send links to these photos to your friends and relatives who haven't seen our nice little town.

- **Trail Maps.** Need some exercise? Check out the trail maps under the *Visitors* tab.

- **Restaurant Guide.** Lafayette's burgeoning Restaurant Row has become a true East Bay destination. We've cataloged it here, under the *Visitors* tab.

Yes, there's a lot to explore on the new website; there's even a little film describing the City's streetpole banner program. And, you can take it anywhere because, in a magic trick of technology, the website will automatically reformat to fit your smart phone or tablet. *Enjoy!*



- **The (Not-So) Secret Stuff.** In the aftermath of those appalling recent municipal scandals around the State, the City Council decided that Lafayette will be at the forefront of transparency practices in California. As a result, with just two clicks from the *Open Government* button on the homepage, you can access the City budget, salary ranges for all employees, the city manager's employment agreement, city councilmember investment holdings, and all kinds of other juicy stuff.

- **Jobs.** Looking for a job with the City? We don't have a lot of them (we've got just 39 regular employees) but sign up anyway and we'll let you know when there are openings for jobs as well as internships and commission appointments. Go to E-Notification under the *City Hall* tab.



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LAFAYETTE IN BRIEF

Council Nixes Bike Park

After more than four years of debate, the City Council recently backed off its plans to build a bike park near the baseball fields at the Lafayette Community Park. The decision came on June 10th and followed four hours of public testimony from several supporters who argued for the facility, and many more opponents who criticized the project's cost, safety, and impact on the natural experience of the park. Opponents also expressed concern about future maintenance costs, which consultants estimated to be \$25,000 or more per year. Though the city had already spent more than \$100,000 on bike park design, planning, and environmental studies, the Council voted to remove the project from the city's multiyear Parks, Trails & Recreation capital improvement plan.

Council Changes the Public Speaking Rules

The City Council's bike park meeting lasted until almost 3AM. The main reason? A lot of people wanted to voice their opinions. Several, however, did not speak but instead chose to "cede their time" to other people, thus allowing some speakers to stack up to six, or nine, or even twelve, minutes of public speaking time. That led to a very long night for the Council and its observers, but that practice will now change. At its meeting on June 24th, the City Council – recognizing that some people are too shy to speak in public and need an alternate voice, but also trying to get people home before midnight – agreed to change the rules so as to allow just one "ceding of time" credit per speaker. The maximum time limit than any person can speak will thus now be six minutes. The new rule also mandates that the "ceder" of time be present in the room for the item. And, in a second move designed to keep the meetings accessible to the public, the City Council also agreed not to begin discussion on any new item after midnight.

Smoking Ordinance to Be Revised

In an effort to address growing concerns about the harmful effects of second hand smoke, particularly in multifamily buildings, the City Council recently decided to beef up the City's smoking ordinance. If the new ordinance is approved, smoking will be banned in:

- All units in new multifamily projects
- Units in exiting multifamily projects that are leased after the regulations become effective
- Common areas in multifamily projects including hallways, doorways, balconies, decks and carports
- Outdoor public areas (plazas) & at public events (Farmers Market, concerts, marathons)
- Outdoor dining areas
- Areas within 20 ft. from any doors, windows, & vents in the downtown



Do you agree with these rules? Make your voice heard at City Council hearings on the proposed regulations this fall. If you are interested in attending the meetings or learning more about our smoking regulations, contact Planning & Building Director Niroop Srivatsa at (925) 299-3206 or nsrivatsa@lovelafayette.org.

CITY DIRECTORY

For Council Members call: 284-1968

Council Members

Michael Anderson	Mayor
Don Tatzin	Vice Mayor
Brandt Andersson	Council Member
Mark Mitchell	Council Member
Traci Reilly	Council Member

Messages to all Council Members:
cityhall@lovelafayette.org

Administration

General Reception and	284-1968
Steven Falk, City Manager	Fax: 284-3169
Tracy Robinson, Admin. Sr. Dir.	299-3227
Gonzalo Silva, Financial Sr. Mgr.	299-3213
Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	299-3210

Community Development

Tony Coe, Engineering Sr. Mgr.	284-1951
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning Sr. Mgr.	284-1976
Ron Lefler, Public Works Sr. Mgr.	299-3214
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	299-3259

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Hansen, Program Mgr.	299-3216
	Or 299-3215

Parks, Trails and Recreation 284-2232

Jennifer Russell, Director	
Senior Services	284-5050

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	911
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	284-5010
Police Business Office:	283-3680

Anonymous Tipline, Traffic Enforcement, Suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3230

Fax	284-3169
Address	3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210
	Lafayette, CA 94549

Website	www.ci.lafayette.ca.us
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E-MAIL: Council/staff members can be reached via e-mail using this address format:

First Initial + Last Name @lovelafayette.org

Example: SFalk@lovelafayette.org

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