

Town Council Moves Palos Colorados

Another Step Forward

By Steve Angelides

The Moraga Town Council skittishly but inexorably moved the proposed Palos Colorados subdivision another step forward tonight by deciding that 4 miles of trails, 386 acres of open space, and a 1.4 acre "pocket park" were enough to satisfy the developer's park obligations.

According to Lori Salamack, Town Planning Director, a single acre of parkland would have been enough to satisfy the developer's obligations under the town code. The code allows a 50% credit for trails and a 50% credit for open space, so Salamack said the developer would have met the park requirement even without the pocket park. With the pocket park she said the developer was providing "more than 100% more" than required.

The Town's Park and Recreation Commission and Planning Commission, in a special joint meeting on March 5, had previously made a unanimous preliminary decision after two hours of discussion that the proposed parkland was "adequate, sufficient and appropriate." Despite that recommendation, and the non-discretionary nature of the issue, the Town Council deliberated for more than an hour before a dwindling audience before making its own final decision on the parkland issue.

Much of the delay came as council members repeatedly sought assurances from Town staff, and from each other, that the Council retained discretion in later stages of the approval process over the placement and construction of the trails and the pocket park. Only after they were repeatedly assured of that by Salamack, Town Manager Phil Vince, and each other, did the council members eventually unanimously adopt Trotter's carefully-worded motion which approved Richfield's parkland deal and allowed the development proposal to move forward.

Salamack said that the Town Planning Department is currently working on the conditions of approval of the Palos

Colorados subdivision. She hopes the conditions will be ready for a study session by the Planning Commission in April, and a public hearing in May, allowing time for further modifications and approval of the Vesting Tentative Map sometime in June. Richfield attorney Alicia Guerra said she hoped to submit the Precise Development Plan in the fourth quarter of 2007, and Vince said he thought it might be approved by around April, 2008. So after years of controversy and delay, Moraga gets another step closer to the Town's \$14 million payment.

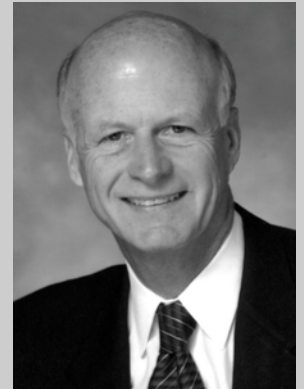


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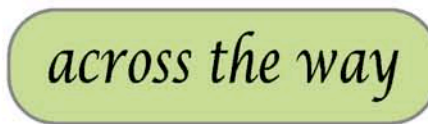
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