

Ascot Intersection Design Underway Camino Pablo Bumps Haunt Council Meeting

By Steve Angelides

The design work for safety improvements to the intersection at Ascot Drive and Moraga Road has begun under the \$115,000 contact approved by the Town Council, at a meeting haunted by references to the Camino Pablo road bumps, which were not on the agenda.

The Ascot design work is the first phase of the \$683,000 project which will be funded by a \$601,000 grant supplemented by Measure C road funds and garbage franchise fees. The recommended design is schedule to be presented to the Town's Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) on November 7, and then to the Council on November 14 or 28.

The contract approved by the Council states that the civil engineer will "prepare plans, specifications and estimates for median islands, driveway modifications, and ADA compliant curb ramps." It states that the traffic engineer "will design the signals for the project and design signal interconnect with the Donald Drive signal." Town Engineer Jill Mercurio told the Council that the contract "includes the study of all alternatives up to and including full signalization."

Three Ascot Drive residents commended the Council for undertaking the Ascot project, and spoke in favor of full signalization of the intersection. They commented on the difficulty of turning left from Ascot onto Moraga Road, especially during the morning rush hour.

Sanders Ranch resident Joe Maloney told the Council he hoped that the Ascot engineering study would be an "independent factual study which will not be biased by anyone on this Council or anyone in this room who may have a hidden agenda." Sanders Ranch is a gated community at the far end of Camino Pablo.

Stan Roth, another bump opponent, told the Council that many residents of Sanders Ranch are "very, very angry" about the Camino Pablo bumps. Although the Council voted to smooth all three of the Camino Pablo bumps after the public outcry about them, by the time of the meeting only one of the three bumps had been smoothed. Roth interrupted the discussion of the Ascot project by demanding to know when the remaining two Camino Pablo bumps would be smoothed. Town Manager Phil Vince responded that the work on all three bumps should be completed by October 20.

Mayor Mike Metcalf responded sharply to what he referred to as Maloney's "insinuations." Although the Camino Pablo bumps were designed by a

contact engineer, Metcalf, as the Mayor, the Chair of TSAC, and the volunteer drafter of TSAC's proposed traffic calming guidelines, has borne the brunt of criticism of the bumps and speculation that he has a "hidden agenda" to impose traffic calming throughout Moraga, including reducing Moraga Road to one lane in each direction.

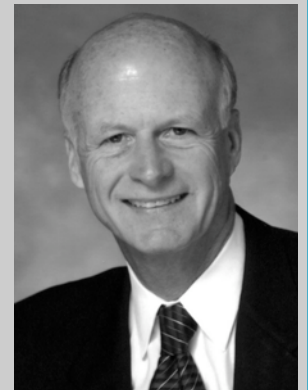
"I'm getting tired of people insinuating that I've got hidden agendas," Metcalf responded. "On Camino Pablo some things were done wrong. We're correcting those issues. On Ascot this Council has decided that enough is enough. We've had two deaths on Moraga Road. That road is a speedway. It's very dangerous. The warrants I saw from the traffic study say we need to do something, and we do. There's no hidden agenda. The one lane road is an idea that has to be discussed very thoroughly. We haven't had that discussion," Metcalf concluded.

When TSAC met to discuss the Camino Pablo plans, the Town notified residents within 300 feet of the project, and only one resident attended. When TSAC met to discuss the process for public input into future traffic improvements including the Ascot project, the Town notified every household in town, and the meeting was packed. Mercurio said the public would have the opportunity to participate in the Ascot project design at the TSAC meeting on November 7 and also at the Council meeting on November 14 or 28.



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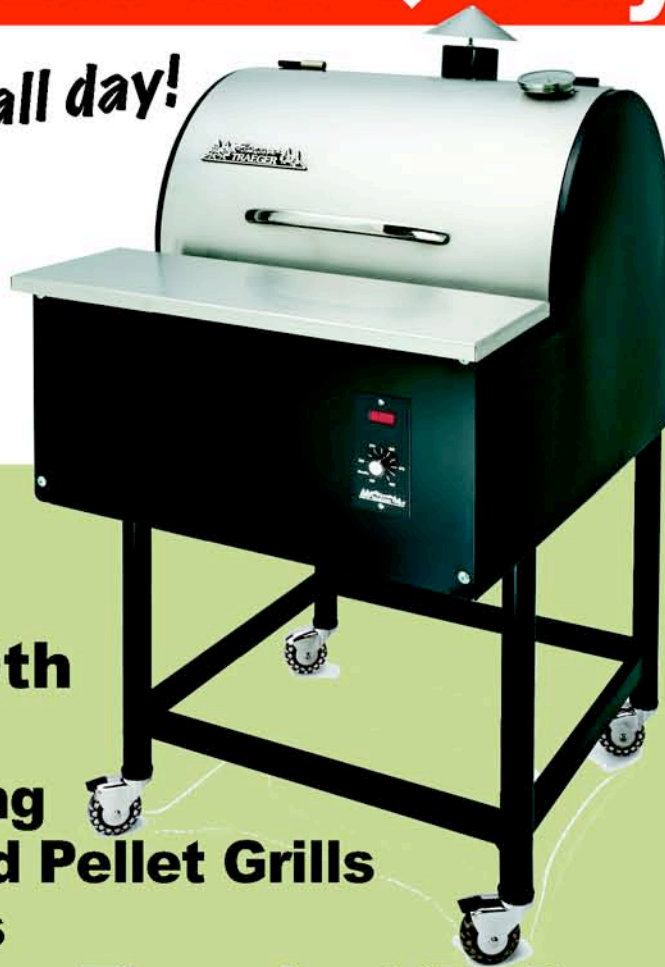
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