

Council Restructures Traffic Committee

By Steve Angelides

The Moraga Town Council has decided to restructure its Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) to add three more public members and remove two council members.

The new TSAC will have 5 voting public members and non-voting liaisons from the police and engineering departments and the fire district. TSAC currently has two public members, the police chief and town engineer, and two council members, all of whom are voting members.

The restructuring proposal came from TSAC itself, and was unanimously adopted by the Council, including the two council members who sit on TSAC, Mayor Mike Metcalf and Council member Ken Chew. Metcalf made the restructuring proposal during a five hour TSAC meeting in October at which TSAC was heavily criticized by members of the public for its structure as well as its role in the installation of three controversial road bumps on Camino Pablo.

"Personally I was responding to an excoriation from the public," Metcalf told the Council. "It was a personal attack and it just seemed to me the best thing to do is to make a change," he explained.

The Camino Pablo bumps caused a furor in August when, to the surprise of many residents, and at least one council member, they were installed as part of the Camino Pablo repaving project. At its meetings in March and April, after the minimum required public notice, TSAC had recommended "slightly raised crosswalks" at the locations of the three bumps. The Town's contract road designer implemented that recommendation by placing speed tables of the maximum standard height at the three locations.

The fierce public uproar that followed resulted in a special five hour council meeting in September, attended by nearly 200 people. At that meeting the council heard from speakers who were evenly divided between bump supporters and opponents, and voted to smooth the bumps to the minimum standard height as a compromise. Nevertheless, bump opponents have continued to vocally oppose the bumps and criticize TSAC at subsequent TSAC and Council meetings, and have even started an anti-bump website, www.moragasafety.org.

The Council considered leaving at least one council member

as a TSAC member or liaison, and Metcalf said he would be willing to continue to serve in that role if necessary.

Bump opponents, including Stan Roth, who has volunteered to be a public member of the new TSAC, supported that idea, but Barbara Simpson, who has also volunteered to join TSAC, opposed it. Ultimately the Council unanimously removed all council participation from TSAC.

The Council will recruit volunteers for TSAC and will interview the candidates in a special public meeting early next year. Topping the new TSAC's agenda will be to review the draft traffic calming guidelines which the Council received from the current TSAC and quickly referred to the new TSAC. A number of suggestions were made for improving the guidelines, among which was to specify what public notice of proposed traffic calming measures should be given.

Metcalf said he hoped the new TSAC would promptly revise the guidelines and submit them to the Council for approval because "there's a lot of pent up demand" for traffic calming. He cited four neighborhoods, the Bluffs, Corliss, Larch, and Rheem, in which he said residents are already organizing to seek traffic calming measures.

Chew said he wanted the current TSAC to revise the guidelines and submit them to the Council before the new TSAC is seated to avoid "a long delay". He said the bump opponents were "a small minority whose sole intention is to disrupt TSAC to keep us from doing what's right for the rest of the community."

When the Council majority decided the guidelines would have to wait for the new TSAC, Chew said they "would have to answer to the rest of the community that wants some type of traffic calming" for the delay. Council member Dave Trotter responded that he was perfectly prepared to do that, because he was elected to take political responsibility for his decisions.