

# LAMORINDA Community

## Meet City Planner Niroop Srivatsa

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As Planning & Building Manager since 2001, her role is to implement the General Plan, the blue print of city land use. Collectively the department spends about half of its time processing development applications, whether it's to build a small addition to a house or to build the Lafayette Mercantile project.

"We process about 250 applications every year; help an applicant through the process, at the staff level, Design Review level, Planning Commission or the City Council. Another large chunk of the department's time is helping the public, "Staff takes turns at the counter and to answer phone calls eight hours a day." A smaller portion of time is spent collaborating with Orinda, Moraga, the County and regional bodies and on long

range issues.

"I spend most of my time, at least currently, working on re-development and housing issues and processing some of the larger projects like The Woodbury and the Mercantile." In her spare time, she volunteers at Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation. "I get so much joy and peace from the dogs; I am lucky to be doing this."

What does she think Lafayette will look like in 10 years? "I see it continuing to remain a most perfect place in which to live and raise a family. I still see the ridgelines and hill-sides protected, still see high quality and very exciting developments in a vibrant downtown.

We have great bones in Lafayette. We need to protect and enhance what we have and watch our city flourish."

## Meet Planning Director Lori Salamack

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"Planning overseas the development plans of the shopping centers and businesses in town, an efficient public transportation system is an important element to create a successful retail climate," she explains. For some time now her department has been working cooperatively on a shuttle program that would link both shopping centers, the St Mary's campus, Ascot Drive (where many students reside), the retirement homes and possibly Campolindo High school. The project is called SMART: St Mary's Ascot Rheem Transit. With the campus having the MBA program housed on Rheem, this makes a lot of sense, and not only for the students. Salamack notes that the College is the largest employer in town, but it does not contribute as much as it could to the local economy.

This interesting development will materialize when long term financing has been secured. Salamack believes that it could be part of the Specific Plan for the Rheem Shopping Center. At the moment, the Planning Department is working on the Moraga Center Specific Plan. The complex process involves the Design Review Board as well as Planning. "I am a flexible person," says Salamack, "the process is fixed but not the order of operations. When managing large projects with many stakeholders, one has to remain adaptable."

If the Planning Director works by the book, the Municipal Code book, she is not shy about making recommendations for modifications when improvements can be made.

Salamack also encourages public comment on planning issues. "It's to the advantage of the public to participate and the government needs to know the view of the public." Salamack believes that it is the role of her department to inform the public about coming meetings, to provide agendas and minutes. But individuals need to be active,

too, and seek the background and complementary information they need.

To be notified of upcoming issues, send an email to Darlene Colaso, the Town Clerk, at [dcolaso@moraga.ca.us](mailto:dcolaso@moraga.ca.us), and ask to be added to the Town's e-mail list.

## Moraga Town Council and Bruzzone Family Embark on the Same "Charrette"

By Sophie Braccini



Joan Bruzzone at a workshop meeting

Photo Sophie Braccini

provement and define the critical mass of mix of housing, office and retail. He insisted that the implementation chapter and the design guidelines that are the building blocks for visual simulation should come first. Mayor Linda Deschambault and Vice-Mayor Dave Trotter maintained that the charrette's purpose was to create an image that would help the community visualize what the Center could be, and that the other elements of the process were conducted simultaneously.

Both parties agreed that cooperation between the property owner and the architect would be productive. Joan Bruzzone confirmed that she would be happy to work with either firm. The Dahlin Group was chosen unanimously by the Council and awarded a \$65,000 contract. The deciding factor was the offer by Dahlin to create a 3D animation that will take viewers through a guided tour of the proposed 'new Moraga.' Both the Town Council and the property owner concluded that the meeting had been constructive and was a step in the right direction.

*\*Charrette is a French term that means "cart." For architects, it refers to a competitive bidding process.*

The Moraga Town Council chose the Dahlin Group on January 23rd as the architect that will provide a visual representation of what the Moraga Center could look like, when a specific plan is approved.

Dick Loewke, a professional urban planner and representative of the Bruzzone family, which owns the land addressed in the Specific Plan, expressed con-

cern about the order in which the town is conducting the operations. "The charrette focuses on what the Center will look like," said Loewke, "but we need first a better understanding of what it takes to get it started, what's needed to stimulate this economic development and to sustain it." According to Loewke, there are several key factors that are necessary: define the infrastructure im-

## The New Face of Parks and Recreation

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At the center of the renovation of the Hacienda are the needs expressed by the population for the revitalization of the recreation programming. "I'm excited to have Recreations back in Moraga," explains Ingram. "This gives us control through diversifying our offerings, allowing us to provide the kind of quality recreation Moragans are looking for." Ingram is enthusiastic about offering a diversified array of recreation for the very young, addressing the need of seniors, notably in partnership with the Moraga Movers, and offering recreation

options for families such as the upcoming Father/Daughter Dance.

Ingram has been contacting teachers who are offering interesting classes in other communities. "I've been teaching ceramics for five years for children and teens in San Ramon," says Sabine Brunner, a ceramics artist displayed in the Bay Area, "Jay Ingram contacted me and convinced me to offer classes in Moraga." At this time, some classes are very successful and sold out, like Carpentry for boys and girls, and the High School Musical

Class; other new offerings have not made it yet caught on, like African Dance and Movement for teens or the Northern Indian cooking class offered by Moraga resident Nisha Kabra.

Ingram is always on the look out for input from the community. For suggestions, send an email to [jingram@moraga.ca.us](mailto:jingram@moraga.ca.us). To review the present catalog of classes and register online, go to [http://moraga.ca.us/production/moraga\\_recreation\\_programs.php](http://moraga.ca.us/production/moraga_recreation_programs.php)

## "MOSPRO" in Line for Moraga's June Ballot

By Sophie Braccini

On Tuesday January 29th the Moraga Open Space Parks and Recreation Ordinance (MOSPRO) Initiative group deposited 2,287 signatures at the office of Darlene Colaso, the Clerk of the Town of Moraga.

The County has thirty days to conduct either a random sampling check of the signatures or a full count. If the County chooses to perform a random sampling and does not get enough valid signatures, it can get an additional thirty days to perform a full count. "We submitted 2,287 signatures, substantially over the required amount of signatures,"

says Mary Jo Rossi, spokesperson for MOSPRO, "so we are confident in either count process conducted by the County."

The Town Council will subsequently review the text and may recommend that staff evaluates its impact. It is not clear yet if the MOSPRO initiative would be in the June or November ballot.

Renata Sos, spokesperson for the proposed competitive measure MOSO 2008, commented that her group would rather not rush to get the MOSO 2008 initiative to the ballot. She hopes that "the voters of Moraga

will recognize that MOSO 2008 is a real open space initiative in contrast with the MOSPRO initiative which is a pro-development initiative."

Some Moraga residents are hoping that more detailed information will be provided before the elections. Paula Pollock, a Moraga resident active in many social circles comments, "This is the first big issue in a long time in Moraga. The lack of clear information on both sides is of concern because both texts can affect our property rights. We need to know what they are trying to achieve."

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