



Moraga's Open Space Initiatives: The Saga Continues

By Sophie Braccini

Like a good mystery novel, each chapter increases the suspense and tension of the situation. This ongoing story may indeed qualify as a mystery, as one must decipher the burgeoning acronyms.

October of last year saw the debut of MOSO 2008 (Moraga Open Space Ordinance 2008), an initiative produced by the Friends of Moraga Open Space (FMOS) to further limit development in Moraga, especially in the Bollinger Canyon (BC), Indian Valley (IV) and Rheem Ridge (RR) areas.

As FMOS gathered signatures, the property owner that would be hardest hit by the initiative, the Bruzzone family, responded with an initiative of its own: MO-SPRO, retitled by the Town's attorney as, "Moraga Initiative Expanding Open Space and Residential Land Use Designations

and Adopting Development Agreement." (MIEOSRLUDADA?)

This second initiative allows for and guarantees development rights for the next 25 years on the BD, IV and RR properties, and offers monies to the town to build a community recreation center on a piece of land that the Bruzzone family would lease to the Town.

The plot thickened when MOSO 2008 bumped into opposition from the Moraga Country Club (MCC), which saw the text as potentially complicating their future development and restoration operations. In an unexpected twist, FMOS withdrew its initiative, even though a significant number of signatures had been gathered on the petition, in order to revamp the text.

The Bruzzone family and its supporters fought a tough battle with the Town

Council, hoping to expedite their initiative and get it placed on the June ballot. There were many dramatic moments, including a mailing campaign claiming "Democracy is dying in Moraga." The Council refused to be rushed, and the Bruzzone initiative will appear on the ballot in the November general election.

A new chapter of the saga has now been opened as a revised MOSO 2008 initiative appears on the scene. In a nutshell, it's the same text as the October initiative but with explicit protection for MCC and Saint Mary's College (SMC). Main features include: no more than 1 dwelling per 20 acres in all prior MOSO-protected and new MOSO 2008 land, prevention of any development on ridgelines, slopes, unstable terrain and near creeks (riparian corridor).

The rights of MCC and SMC are explicitly protected. Section 2 (l): "The Ordinance does not apply to any land owned, operated, or leased by the Moraga Country Club..." The ordinance clearly also excludes land owned by SMC from its jurisdiction.

MOSO 2008 supporters must now return to the streets of Moraga in search of new signatures for their petition. Petitioners must gather the valid signatures of 10% of Moraga voters and submit them to the Town Clerk by mid-May in order to be eligible for the November ballot.

It's a real page-turner, and this story is far from over. Stay tuned, fearless readers.

