



Growing Pains on the Recreation Scene in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

During the March 22nd meeting between the Town Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission, Parks and Rec. Foundation Board Member Howard Harpham expressed concerns about the future ability of the Foundation to manage the Moraga Summer Concerts in the Park series.

“Some of our members have stepped down,” he said, “our lack of attendance is such that at our last meeting we couldn’t reach the necessary quorum to make the decision to pay certain fees for the bands for the upcoming season.” He added that the key person behind the concession stand could no longer do the work. On top of that, according to Harpham, the lack of a proper sound ordinance was just an added stress factor for the Foundation.

The Foundation has organized the summer concerts in Moraga for years. But this great tradition might be threatened by excessive success. The event has grown over the years and attracts people from neighboring cities. The food supply had to be increased in volume and diversity. At the beginning, families brought picnics to the park where the concerts are held; now the concession stand provides a growing variety of food, and requires increased planning and manpower.

The bandshell was updated to improve the sound quality and the numbers of concerts. At the same time, the owner of a property neighboring the park brought a lawsuit against the Town and the Foundation: the sound level was too high and the Town didn’t have a proper sound ordinance to fight back. In the light of potential legal risks, the Foundation declined to take the legal responsibility for the 2008 concert season. The Town of Moraga agreed to take over the summer concert series to protect the Foundation. The discussion of a sound ordinance has been postponed to October because of other priority items.

Councilmember Mike Metcalf questioned the placement of the responsibility of the organization of the concerts solely on the Foundation.

Vice Mayor Dave Trotter suggested that after the sound ordinance was passed, the Council should again meet jointly with the Commission and the Foundation to address optimal configuration to ensure that the concert series remains one of the jewels of the Town.

Mayor Lynda Deschambault suggested the establishment of the business model for how the two Foundations (Parks and Rec. and Hacienda), staff, the Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission should work together, and not only on the concerts. All agreed that the old model had been outgrown and that new methods of communication and partnership had to be determined.

No worries for the 2008 concert series: Jay Ingram, Parks and Recreation Director, confirmed that all the contracts with the bands were either already filed or on their way. Harpham felt confident that the Foundation would find ways to organize and manage the concession stand. “We need new members,” he added.

If you are interested in serving with one of the oldest community service organizations in town, go to <http://www.moragaparks.org/>



Concert at Moraga Commons last Summer

Photo Andy Scheck