**Published September 3, 2008**

# Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Loses Its Bump

*By Sophie Braccini*

One last look at the raised crosswalk by JM Intermediate School Photo Sophie

The speed table soap opera refuses to come to an end, but a decisive step was taken on August 27th when the Moraga Town Council decided in a 3 to 2 vote to remove the speed table at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JM), replacing it with a paved cross walk but no other special equipment. Residents tried to leave a door open for further development; a private group offered to help fund equipment to enhance pedestrian safety, and the Moraga School District was very disappointed with the vote. The vote to remove the traffic calming mechanism without a replacement device was unexpected. During the May 28th Council meeting, the three Councilmembers who voted to remove the speed table, Vice Mayor Trotter, Councilmembers Rochelle Bird and Mike Metcalf, had stated their objective of replacing the speed table with something else in order to reduce vehicle speed in front of the middle school. Trotter had said, "Staff (should be) directed to come up with an engineering solution at JM to maintain the progress gained in calming traffic with raised crosswalks." Bird wanted to see drivers slow down near the school and suggested they would not do so unless forced. She wanted to see something to ensure that speeds were reduced at JM. Metcalf suggested that the same mistakes could be made again by piece-mealing the road. He had added that the progress made since speeds on the road were slower with the speed bumps, should not be given away. Nonetheless, last week all three voted to remove the raised table without adding any traffic calming apparatus. Budgetary concerns and some degree of lassitude may have been the reason for the vote. Town Engineer Jill Mercurio estimated that the cost of flashing pedestrian activated lights would be in the ballpark of $70,000 per cross walk. The Town's current budget situation makes such spending unrealistic. Vice-Mayor Trotter

started exploring the possibility for private funding for the equipment. Stan Roth founder of "Citizens for Moraga Safety" (moragasafety.org) suggested his group could look into fund raising to reimburse the town for the expense of this safety apparatus. His preference was that the town adds the flashing elements now, so the road would not have to be dug up again at a later date, adding unnecessary expenses. This private funding suggestion met with more than skepticism from Councilmember Ken Chew, "We had said that we would remove the raised cross walk if we had something to replace it with. We cannot leave our policy-making duty to private groups that could never raise the money anyway." "We will do it," responded Roth, "we are all parents and we want our kids safe." None of JM's staff or PTA representatives attended the meeting, though they had previously sent letters and spoken in support of the raised crosswalk. Moraga School Superintendent Rick Schafer said later that he was very disappointed with the Council's decision. "I have concerns with the security of the children crossing Camino Pablo going to and from school," said Schafer, "the new resurfacing of the road invites speeding and the raised crosswalk was efficiently reducing the pace, even on weekends when so many sporting events take place on campus." Schafer says he understands the concerns that were raised by the opponents of the raised crosswalks, like additional traffic on Larch and delays in emergency response time, yet he and the two principals who manage the schools on Camino Pablo are dissatisfied that the raised crosswalks will be removed without being replaced with another type of traffic control.

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