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## Moraga: A Year in Review

By *Sophie Braccini*

In 2008, Moraga was led by a "Green Mayor;" Lynda Deschambault promoted a rather green and progressive agenda in a town that used to see itself as conservative. By August, Moraga had joined Orinda and Lafayette as "blue" cities, with voters registered as Democrats holding a small majority over registered Republicans.

The "Shop Moraga First" campaign was launched. The movement has raised awareness among residents of the importance of shopping locally to keep the town vibrant and sales tax dollars in Moraga's coffers.

The Specific Plan for the Moraga Center (roughly the area between Camino Ricardo, Moraga Way and Moraga Road) made progress, incorporating public comments and presenting a first visualization of what this area could become.

Bumps! Traffic calming devices set the town on fire. After Camino Pablo was repaved, three raised cross walks were built close to the two schools on that street. The fierce battle that ensued, in which citizens wanting to protect student pedestrians opposed those who didn't want emergency vehicles to be slowed down, lasted for months resulting in the removal of two of the three speed tables.

Voters debated between two land use initiatives. Measure K wanted to restrict further possible construction in Moraga's open space while measure J allowed for development and offered perks to the town. A strong "no on both" movement emerged and both measures were defeated in the November ballot.

Wild animals attack Moraga properties. Besides the usual turkeys that have been more and more fiercely roaming the streets of Moraga, 2008 saw the rise of new wild species threatening private properties. Large herds of wild pigs destroyed gardens around town and residents called "Fish and Game" hoping to turn them into sausage. The unusual presence of a crocodile was reported as well, but this did not appear to be a concerted attack by that species.

EBMUD closed Moraga Road for pipe work and Moraga Way got a much-needed facelift. Moragans braced for a summer stuck in town with roadwork on the two main routes out of town as Moraga Road was completely closed for 8 weeks. Thanks to good communication and efficient "flaggers," the summer rolled smoothly.

Staff is stressed out. During the last part of 2008, several members of the Town staff resigned and were not replaced. At every meeting, the Town Council makes a point to thank whoever is left for their dedication and hard work.

Two new faces appeared on the Council in December. Three available seats were hotly contested in the November election. The only incumbent, Michael Metcalf was re-elected, along with two new council members, Karen Mendonca and Howard Harpham.

Police Chief Mark Ruppenthal leaves after 29 years of service to Moraga. He is replaced by Interim Chief Robert Priebe, who started with "Rupp" in Moraga 29 years ago.

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