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Dog Owners Antsy Over Animal Control Action

By Sophie Braccini



Signs at Rancho Laguna Park

Photos Sophie Braccini

It's a dog's life for dog owners in Moraga. No dog parks, no authorized area to let your pooch run off all that energy and reconnect with furry friends, nowhere but two places: Rancho Laguna Park in Moraga before 9 a.m. and 1 hour before dusk and on Donald Drive along Mulholland Ridge. So when Contra Costa County Animal Services came to Rancho Laguna and ticketed dog owners at 3:50 p.m. on a recent afternoon, some became distressed. On January 14th a large number of dog owners attended the Town Council meeting to express their concerns.

phone with her walker; Luis Toledo, a 24-year resident of Moraga stated that he got a ticket from Animal Control and couldn't understand why the officers wouldn't listen to his explanations.

There might be some reasons for that. As you enter Rancho Laguna, the first prominent large white sign that can be seen reads "Dogs MUST be on leash and under control at all times 9 a.m. to 7 p.m." Further away in the bushes a brown sign reads, "Pets must be on leash and under control after 9 a.m. with the exception of being off leash 1 hour before dusk during standard time and after 7 p.m. during daylight savings time."

Therefore, dog owners interpreted the text as, "I can have my dog unleashed one hour before

dusk," while CCCAS seems to interpret it as no dog unleashed between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. (at press time CCCAS had not return our calls requesting clarification).

"The problem is that the old text is fuzzy," says Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, "when Animal Control gets to a Park they apply their rule, which is no animal off leash. If municipalities want something else they need to have a very clear rule."

The Council asked that the matter be resolved and Ingram said the topic was going to be heard by the Parks and Recreation Commission at its January meeting on the 20th. "We should have a simple and straight forward rule like "dogs can be off leash before 9 a.m. and after 4 p.m.," suggests the Director.

ANTI-FREEZE OR COOLANT??

Ask Jeff



Jeff Joyce

Aren't all coolants the same? Signed, Baffled in Berkeley

Dear Baffled:

Always consult your owners manual for recommended fluids your car uses. Modern cars can require vehicle specific fluids that should never be substituted for. There are green coolants, red, yellow and orange coolants currently used in cars. Mixing types is not recommended. If not sure, top off with plain tap water until the proper coolant is identified. Never drive when coolant is low, as serious engine damage may occur.

Dear Jeff:

According to the temperature gauge in my car, it always reads cool. That must mean my cooling system is just fine, right? Signed, Joe Cool in Concord

Dear Mr. Cool:

First, never assume your gauges are 100% accurate. Actually, an engine that runs too cool is not necessarily a good thing. Most modern day engines require a minimum temperature of 195 degrees for engine management sensors to function properly as well as heater perform-

ance. Annual cooling system maintenance can prevent costly engine repairs and will insure your car will perform properly year-round. Be sure to use a trusted facility to service your car.

Dear Jeff:

The heater in my car is not getting very warm lately during these cold mornings. Any advise on what I should do? Signed, Chilly in Orinda

Dear Chilly:

The heating system on most cars is a function of your cooling system. The heater relies on warm coolant from your engine to produce the heated air that comes through your ventilation system. A faulty/sticky thermostat could be the problem. Always have an annual cooling system check-up either in the fall or spring to insure all components are functioning properly and replace the thermostat during routine maintenance. Jeff Joyce has been the Manager of Express Oil Change & Tire Center since 2004. He can be reached at 925-254-8989 or jjoyce@orindamotors.com

Whatever you call it, it's a vital part of protecting your cars cooling system. From extreme cold to extreme heat, your cars health and survival depend on proper operation and routine maintenance. Most engine breakdowns are caused by cooling system failure due to component failure, rust and corrosion build up and lack of service by a competent service facility.

Recently I needed to add coolant to my car, but I don't know what type to use for my car.

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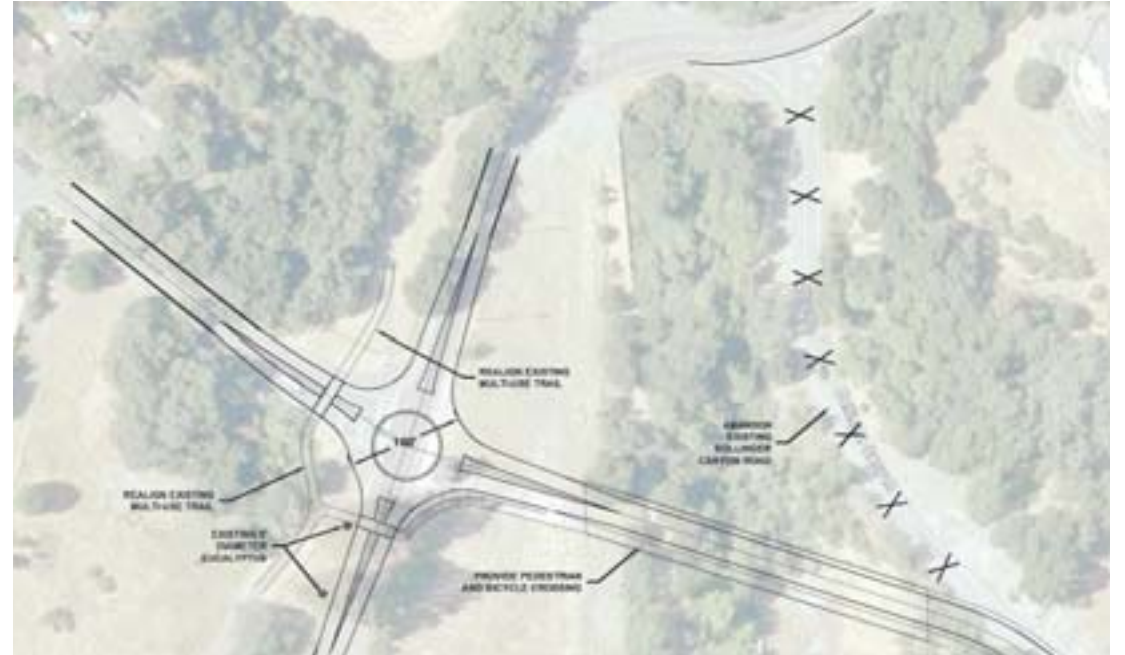
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A Roundabout on St. Mary's Road?

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A roundabout could regulate the traffic at Rheem, St Mary's and a redirected Bollinger

Picture courtesy of Fehr and Peers and the Town of Moraga

This solution, which is the most expensive, would imply the building of a bridge over a creek on St Mary's College property; and this was the only option that completely satisfied the Bluffs residents. However, both cost and the need for a long review process preclude that option, at least in the short term. A roundabout that would involve Rheem Boulevard and St Mary's Road may be the first step.

The members of TSAC, led by Chair Barbara Simpson, had

many questions for Mercurio as it attempted to gage the cost of each solution. "If a stimulus package is on its way, you must have a whole list of projects," added Simpson, "it needs to be prioritized." Other members of the committee had questions regarding the security of roundabouts, since they are not common in this area. Members of the committee agreed to drive/walk each intersection before the next meeting and asked Interim Chief of Police Robert Priebe to give them

the latest incident figures.

At their next meeting in February, TSAC will receive and review the answers to its questions and make a recommendation to the Council, which is the deciding body. Mercurio believes that it is still possible to get the project ready to be granted money under a stimulus package, "it will depend on who will be required to approve the plan along the way," she said, "but I'm confident I could get the project ready for endorsement."

Building in Open Space in Moraga Proves Thorny

By Sophie Braccini

At its meeting on January 14th the Moraga Town Council sent the planned Hetfield development project back to the Planning Commission for further environmental study.

The battle of experts between the developer and the neighborhood association that formed to fight the project, created enough of a doubt in the mind of Council Members that they applied the principle of precaution and asked for the Planning Commission to determine the scope of a process that will reexamine the geotechnical data, the adequacy of the project with the General Plan, and its respect of the slope limitations set in the Moraga Open Space Ordinance.

New Mayor Dave Trotter grabbed the helm with both hands at this first meeting of the new Council and imposed a structured and orderly style, keeping everyone within their allocated time.

The crowd was fairly large at the meeting. One person spoke in favor of the property owner and seventeen spoke against. Many comments from residents pertained to the beauty and uniqueness of the space proposed for development. The property is a hill with a creek, many trees, a trail, and abundant wild life. Several cited the Los En-

cinos project, just on the other side of the hill, that has been graded and left barren and dusty, without any development, despite the fact that the Town approved its development.

The experts who presented on behalf of the parties presented compelling arguments. One pivotal moment was when Laurel Collins, principal geomorphologist at Watershed Sciences in Berkeley, speaking for the appellants, demonstrated the existence of a fault on the Hetfield property that had been ignored by the applicants. "They used a 1980 map," she said, "this fault was identified in 1986 and is on maps since then."

Another crucial moment came when an upper Hetfield resident took the stand to share the catastrophic state of her house that is severely impacted by movements on the hill behind it. As she talked, the audience fell completely silent, and each one was reminded of the unpredictability of the soil conditions and landslides in this area. Council member Howard Harpham, who referred to a personal flood incident in his home, reinforced the general feeling of risk linked to the issue.

The Town's consultant for the project, Mitch Wolfe, gave a compelling defense of the developer, ex-

plaining the studies that had been made and the practices used were adequate and commonly used. To the question of how to address the issue of the fault uncovered by Mrs. Collins, he explained that this could be addressed with sub-drainage. His assertiveness won over Council Member Michael Metcalf, who declared being persuaded by him.

Council Member Ken Chew, who has always defended open space protection, questioned the appropriateness of the project itself, its compliance with Moraga General Plan and MOSO 1986. He stated that he believes that the property owner just seeks the Town's approval in order to resell the land and he was concerned that Hetfield would suffer the same fate as Los Encinos.

After hearing all the testimony the Council, supported by Town attorney Michelle Kenyon, decided to request further study. "Based on the evidence presented here tonight, there is a fair argument under CEQA that this project would have a significant environmental impact," said the Mayor. Council Member Karen Mendonca made the motion to send to project back to the Planning Commission for a focused Environmental Impact Report; the motion was adopted unanimously.

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