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Changes for Moraga's Beautification and Tree Planting Committee

By *Sophie Braccini*

Some had talked about sun-setting Moraga's Beautification and Tree Planting Program Implementation Committee. Its mission had been reassigned mid-term in the wake of a controversy about the Moraga Road traffic study and the setting of a new and improved Traffic and Safety Advisory Committee that took over the traffic safety part of its charter. When Christine Kuckuk, chair of the committee, presented her report to the Town Council on January 28th, it appeared that the group had achieved some important steps and that more work could be accomplished in the area of trees and beautification.

Kuckuk explained that the "tree" part of their mission had not been completed. Only a fraction of the town's trees on main arterials and town property have been inventoried and the town just applied to be part of the Tree City USA, an organization that requires a "Tree Board" to be set in place. When Council Member Mike Metcalf inquired as to the benefit of membership, Kuckuk explained that the organization provides access to grants for trees and forestry programs, gives advice and procedures for tree care and requires very little from the town, other than celebrating "Arbor Day" at whatever time is deemed appropriate.

In her presentation, Christine Kuckuk reminded the Council of the Gates report, that had been ordered by the Town and that proposed guidelines for esthetic considerations while building on the scenic corridors. "We would recommend finding a home for this report so the public and staff have easy access to it," she said. Acting Town Manager Jay Tashiro highlighted the importance of clarifying what was to be applied in the text and what not, "property owners need to have clear guidelines about what the Town expects," he stated. It was proposed that the Design Review Board review the Gates report and add what was relevant to the design guidelines for the Town.

Mayor Dave Trotter asked Kuckuk if the committee would be available to give advice on trees and beautification as part of the Specific Plan that aims to revitalize Moraga Center, "your input would be very valuable," he said. It was decided that the committee would not be disbanded and would continue to pursue its mission, but with a new, shorter name: The Tree Planting Committee.

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