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Published February 18th, 2008

Artificial Turf on Moraga's Sports Fields?

By *Sophie Braccini*



Campolindo's synthetic field, by FieldTurf Photo Sophie Braccini

Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram invites the Moraga community to an informational meeting on artificial turf on February 24th, at 6:30 p.m., at the Hacienda de las Flores (2100 Donald Drive). If the public expresses an interest, the Town will engage in further discussions with the Moraga School District regarding the installation of artificial turf on school grounds as well as in some the of the Town's parks.

"There are many arguments in favor of such a solution," explains Ingram, "once in place, the surface requires less maintenance, less water, no pesticides or herbicides, and offers a surface that can be used year round." Ingram has invited two potential suppliers and Dave Humphrey, Acalanes Union High School District Director of Facilities and Construction, who has direct experience with artificial turf, to answer any questions the community might have.

"We have installed this type of surface at Acalanes, Campolindo, Las Lomas and Miramonte on their stadium athletic fields," explains Humphrey. "These fields are in constant use, year round from all the district needs and outside groups. Maintaining any field with such high usage is a challenge," he says. The school fields were set between 2002 and 2005, and according to Humphrey, "the fields continue to perform very well; they met our expectations and look great."

Moraga School District Superintendent Rick Schafer will also attend the meeting. Ingram's project includes installation of the surface at the district's

schools, a decision that would require the approval of the School Board. Ingram has also invited local sports groups and facility users to attend the meeting.

Artificial turf is a controversial issue. The cost of installation is high (\$11 to \$12 per square foot). During extremely hot days, elevated heat is transmitted from the field; in case of bleeding injuries the field needs to be cleaned to avoid the transmission of blood-borne pathogens; and according to some medical research, earlier installations have triggered more ankle and knee injuries for athletes. (Source: "Artificial Turf: Does it Increase the Risk of Sports Injuries?" by Mark Drakos, MD, 2008 Sports Medicine Fellow, Hospital for Special Surgery).

"No decision has been made yet," says Ingram, "the purpose of this meeting is to get the pulse of the community and have all the tough questions on the table."

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