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by Gabriel Froymovich

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STAYING AHEAD OF TROUBLE



Jeff Joyce

With tough economic times, many motorists are choosing to postpone services on their vehicles. But we must not lose sight of the importance of regular vehicle services. Today's cars offer longer service intervals, but pushing the limits beyond recommendations may prove to be more costly than routine maintenance. Be sure to follow manufactures service intervals. At the first sign of trouble, contact your trusted local service facility for help before the concern becomes a serious breakdown.

Dear Jeff:
 What's the difference between a "Service Engine Soon" light and a "Maintenance Required" light? Don't they both mean I just need an oil change? My car is running just fine but it does seem to be using more gas than usual.

Signed, Clueless in Concord

Dear Clueless:
 Actually these are two separate concerns. Many vehicles include an oil life monitor designed to display a message when its time for routine service. This would be your "Maintenance Required" or "Change Oil Soon" light. The "Service Engine Soon" light is the same as a "Check Engine Light". This is likely related to an on board engine management malfunction. This could be something as simple as a loose gas cap to a computer control component failure. It may not always cause a car to run poorly but could lead to poor fuel mileage and excessive tailpipe emissions.

Dear Jeff:
 My car has a timing belt that has never been changed. My car is still running fine and has 80000 miles. What's your advice?

Signed, Broke in Berkeley

Dear Broke,
 Timing belts are not something you want to gamble with. They are a vital component to your engines survival and failure could result in significant internal

engine damage. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations regarding timing belt service. Visit a trustworthy shop, and you'll be able to enjoy a long, trouble free driving experience.

Dear Jeff:
 My mechanic tells me I need new shocks and struts for my car, but I'm not sure that's really true. My car is only 5 years old and has only 72000 miles and still runs fine. How do know if I really need these replaced.

Signed, Frugal in Fremont

Dear Frugal:
 Nobody likes to spend money if they don't have to these days, but your mechanic is giving you good, sound advice. The industry standard for shock and strut replacement is 50,000 miles. Worn shocks/struts can reduce braking ability and cause uneven tire wear. Handling and ride quality also can be restored to new conditions with new shocks or struts. So to keep your car performing safely and efficiently, shock and strut maintenance should not be overlooked

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

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LAMORINDA Community

“Rancho” Club Almost Finished

By Cathy Tyson



View of the “Rancho” main clubhouse, still under construction

Photo provided

Members of the Rancho Colorados Swim and Tennis Club will be able to use their new and improved club, scheduled to open in time for the swim season starting in May, according to Marketing Director Todd Mullins. “The mild winter, thus far, will help the schedule,” he added. The soon-to-be finished buildings are the culmination of years of hard work by board members and volunteers who saw the need for improvements back in 2002. Club members were supportive of the project and voted overwhelmingly, 91% in favor, to assess themselves in order to pay for the project.

Since 1961, Lafayette families have been enjoying the club

at the end of Rohrer drive in Burton Valley. But like most structures that are forty seven years old, the buildings had seen better days.

Construction of the new 2,395 square foot expanded main clubhouse building and a new tennis building started in October. The original clubhouse was a mere 831 square feet and did not have enclosed storage or ADA compliant bathrooms that the new space has. Tennis court resurfacing will be done as a separate project by a different contractor after the main project is completed, and will be scheduled to not impact the USTA season.

Early in the process there

was some friction with the neighbors over increasing the number of families that belong to the club, parking, lighting, hours of operation, and swim meets. Compromises were made to address the major concerns. In the end the conversations created a process where the collective group of neighbors could come together to agree on a Road Maintenance Agreement for the private section of Rohrer Drive.

“More than anything else, Rancho is a throwback to an era where kids can be kids in a safe and stable environment all summer long, and grown ups can hang out and enjoy time with friends and neighbors by the pool and barbeque,” said Mullins.

Happy Ending in Happy Valley

By Cathy Tyson



Side walk on Happy Valley Drive

Photo Cathy Tyson

In a heroic effort, Happy Valley residents came up with \$20,000 to co-fund the realignment of the sidewalk on Happy Valley Drive. Bill Bucher, President of the Happy Valley Improvement Association was very straightforward, “We don’t want promises or e-mails, we want checks.”

Approximately a dozen Happy Valley Elementary students made their case to the City Council:

“We don’t think it’s very safe with the path so close to the street. One of our very good friends got hit by a car.” One young lady mentioned that, “when trucks drive by they blow your hair.”

Mayor Tatzin said he checked it out and joked that if he had more hair it would have blown too with the passage of a speeding truck.

Back in October, residents of

the Happy Valley area asked that their newly improved pedestrian pathway from Franklin Lane to Vallory Lane be moved farther away from the street. The new pathway is, “fully compliant with current standards and practices, and is consistent with similar facilities citywide that have operated without any known history of safety issues,” according to a staff report. Still residents strongly preferred to have the pathway moved farther away from the road.

Because the city had just paid for the improvements, Council Members were reluctant to spend more money reconfiguring the sidewalk, but were concerned about pedestrian safety, so they cut a deal. If residents could come up with a substantial sum, the city would match it. The relocation is estimated to cost \$56,000; there is a \$16,000 in grant money remaining for the pathway. Generous neighbors came up with \$20,000 in donations, so the pathway got the green light.

Planning Commission Discusses Palos Colorados

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When we adopted the vesting map, we were under the impression that specifics, such as energy conserving requirements, would be discussed at a later time in the process.”

Goglia suggested that the Commission may not have been completely informed as to the level of their approval. Town staff and legal counsel were asked to re-

search the issue and report back to the Commission on the applicability of the Town's green building guidelines.

The last surprise of the evening was the discovery by the public in attendance that the secondary units that are proposed in the project may not be of great use in helping the town reach its required share of affordable housing.

“Secondary units could count toward moderate units,” said Salamack, “the State decides.”

The commissioners asked that a joint meeting with the design review board be held to study the general compliance of the project and that staff report on it as well. That meeting was scheduled to be held on February 17th, after press time.

Artificial Turf on Moraga’s Sports Fields?

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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 contro-

versial 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.”