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## Moraga's Town Council and Park and Recreation Commission Hear from Sports and Pet Enthusiasts

By Dean Okamura

A crowded room of sport enthusiasts and dog owners eagerly waited for their opportunity to address the Special Joint Meeting of the Moraga Town Council and Parks and Recreation Commission held on March 3rd at the Hacienda de las Flores. The most divisive topics on the agenda included an open discussion for the use of Measure WW funds and the status of Rancho Laguna Park as an off-leash area for dogs.

Measure WW was passed in November 2008 and allows the East Bay Parks District to disperse \$125 million from a bond issue for city park and recreation improvements. Moraga is projected to receive nearly \$735,000 after a specific project is identified.

When the floor opened, Colin Knightly, Director of Lamorinda Lacrosse, responded, "with nearly 400 players, a third of which comes from Moraga, it is becoming difficult to compete with the other sports for field space. "

Joe Rosenbaum, President of Moraga Baseball and coach for Lamorinda Rugby, continued the sentiment by indicating that even on sunny days the prospects of finding quality space for practice is remote. He described how poor weather days make practice on tennis courts or in gyms the only option.

After several more emotionally charged statements the Council closed the floor and made recommendations. Commissioner John Haffner summed up the support for more sport fields from Vice Chair Liz Faoro and Council Members Mike Metcalf and Howard Harpham by stating, "...we will move slow, but aggressively (in developing a plan)."

Mayor Dave Trotter indicated that a Joint Use Agreement between the Moraga School District and the town has not been finalized. This agreement would allow the Town of Moraga to improve school properties for public use provided upkeep is made by the town. Without this agreement, improvements to school property cannot occur.

When asked, Richard Schafer, Superintendent of the Moraga School District, indicated that a mutually vetted agreement was presented to the town for approval late last year and the Town set a date in April for a response. After learning of the Council's openness to improve school property, Schafer indicated that the Moraga Sports Alliance (an advisory committee that was established in order to identify the best school property for sports field improvement) has already agreed that Camino Pablo is the best site for improvement.

Discussion of the vision for Rancho Laguna Park began with the room still crowded. Dog owners and frequent users of the park spoke about the park's rural feel and access to East Bay Park trails, its social value for pet owners, and poor suitability for sports field construction.

Residents expressed how a dog friendly area adds value to the experience of living in Moraga. Metcalf and Trotter followed with recommendations to the Commission focused on clearly identifying hours of use in the Moraga Municipal Code and studying if the farthest east portion of the park could be dedicated as a dog area.

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