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• **LAMORINDA Community** •
Woman of the Year



In front of the entire State Assembly, Lafayette's own Louise Harvey Clark was named "Woman of the Year" for Assembly District 14, because of her lengthy history of service to the community. "She has long been an advocate for peace and justice, children, women and seniors and has proven to be a powerful force in our community," said Assembly Member Skinner in her tribute. Pictured from left, Speaker of the Assembly Karen Bass, Louise Harvey Clark, Assembly Member Nancy Skinner and Assembly Minority Leader Mike Villines

Photo provided

Moraga En Route to Approving its Housing Element and Specific Plan

By Sophie Braccini
The Moraga Center Specific Plan (MCSP) and the Housing Element for Moraga continue to be developed by the Town, in spite of a non-buy-in by the main property owner, the Bruzzone family.

On March 26 a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and the Design Review Board was conducted as part of a series of public sessions that aim at adopting the MCSP (in the area comprised between Moraga Rd, Moraga Way and Camino Ricardo) and at establishing a Housing Element for the Town of Moraga, complying with its State obligation.

The MCSP will determine specific zoning and design guidelines for these areas. Whether the property owner will ever decide to develop the pear orchard along Camino Ricardo, the Ranch area and the Laguna Creek, the R.V. and overflow parking area and renovate the Moraga Center shopping center remains to be seen, since the Bruzzone family continues to display opposition to the plan as it is proposed.

At the March 26 meeting Joan Bruzzone and her son David both addressed the Planning Commission and the Design Review

Board as part of the public comment period, raising different concerns and objections, making it obvious that this plan is not to their liking. "What role do you envision for the property owner in this design process?" asked Mrs. Bruzzone. David Bruzzone raised the issue of the appropriateness of the proposed density of 20 dwelling units per acre.

"We have been working with them (the Bruzzone family) since the fall of 2002 on these questions," said Lori Salamack. It is the duty of the Town to plan, but without a consensus it is hard to imagine when residents will see anything actually happen. The alternative of doing nothing and not spending the money that goes into planning is not an option either: "If there is no plan, then when a developer comes back with a project such as the Orchard Supply store, the town goes in an uproar and there is no rule to fall back on," explains Salamack.

The Bruzzone family did not comment on its plans for the Moraga Center.

In the meantime, the Specific Plan is being fully vetted and options will be decided in the months

to come. The public is invited to check the pictures that are online (www.ci.moraga.ca.us) that show what the proposed land use rules could translate to. At the March 25 meeting, a simulation video presented by the Dahlin Group got many of the Commissioners quite puzzled. "It looks like downtown Emeryville," said Commissioner Allison Daniels, while DRB member Sayles expressed concerns about the preservation of the Laguna Creek and its riparian corridor.

Residents who have questions and desire to express concerns can come to future public meetings. Different aspects will be studied in the coming months with a decision that could be reached by the end of the summer. Dates are tentative at this time; check the Town web site for update. Right now it is planned that traffic and recreation amenities will be discussed at the April 6 meeting, that the Planning Commission will recommend a level of development (number of units that could reach more than 700) at its April 20 meeting, and that the Town Council could approve the MCSP at its May 27 meeting.

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Alzheimer's disease is a neurodegenerative disorder—a disorder in which brain cells are lost. It is characterized by progressive loss of memory and cognitive function, such as movement control and decision-making ability. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia in the elderly and affects about 18 million people worldwide—5 million in the U.S. alone. Although there's currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, research is under way to find a new investigational treatment aimed at slowing the progression of the disease. The current medications are mostly aimed at maximizing the remaining brain activity. That's why the ICARA study was created—to explore a new investigational treatment option.

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Dr. Kathleen Toups
Bay Area Research Institute
3736 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite #204
Lafayette, CA 94549
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If you are 50 to 88 years of age and have a diagnosis of probable Alzheimer's disease, you may be eligible to participate in the ICARA study.



Meet Mike Segrest, Moraga's New Town Manager
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Mike Segrest

Photo Sophie Braccini

He believes that the town has a lot of untapped potential and that the specific plans for both the Moraga and Rheem Centers can put the town on track to a more healthy revenue path. "The key to a development plan is to understand where your market is and the realistic potential of any given situation," believes Segrest. He thinks that the small number of property owners in Moraga is an asset to defining a

solid path forward.

Segrest is now in the process of getting to know his diverse constituency and the financial challenges that face the Town. "That's where it all begins, the budget," he says, "it's truly where you set your priorities."

When he arrived at Snowmass, Segrest says, the town had been in the red for three years and he turned the situation around in

one year. "We examined our expenses, the allocation and structure of the finances and the revenue side and we were able to make the necessary adjustments." It's too early for him to make an assessment of Moraga's financial situation and the Town's goal setting meeting, scheduled for the first week of May, should provide a good forum for communicating how he plans to navigate financial priorities.

"I am looking forward to working with the new Revenue Enhancement Committee as well," says Segrest. Over all, Segrest is optimistic about the future of Moraga. "There is a lot of untapped potential in this pretty town," he says, "it could even become a mini destination where people would come for dinner and walk around town, attracted by the charm of the destination." But at this point, the new Town Manager is dedicating his time to more clearly understanding Moraga's unique position and aspirations for the future.

Moraga Appoints a Revenue Enhancement Committee
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Robert Kennedy is a past Treasurer of the Town and current member of the Audit and Finance Committee. Ravi Mallela is a banker, working in Corporate Finance at Wells Fargo. He is the current chairman of the Moraga Parks and Recreation Commission. Dick Olsen is retired, a former senior executive at Transamerica Insurance and an instrumental member of the mid-1990's ad hoc committee appointed by the Town Council to study the feasibility of forming the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, and then helped lead the successful LAFCO annexation and election campaigns that followed;

financial analysis is one of Olsen's many strengths. Kathy Ranstrom is an attorney and professor of law at John F. Kennedy University; she is a past president of MEF and the chair of recent successful Moraga School District parcel tax campaigns. Frank Sperling was elected to the Moraga Orinda Fire District Board in 2006, he was a Moraga Town Councilmember (1994-1998) and former mayor. Tom Westhoff is an investment banker, founder and president of Westhoff, Cone & Holmstedt, a Walnut Creek investment banking firm specializing in municipal bond financing in the State of California;

he is an active Moraga volunteer and former member of the Moraga Park and Recreation Foundation. Representing the Town Council, Metcalf and Trotter will sit on the committee, as will Tracy Vesely, the current Town Treasurer. One member will be appointed in collaboration with the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. The Town Manager and Finance Director will also be part of the committee.

The meetings of the committee will be subject to the Brown Act and open to the public. Meeting times will be set by the committee and posted on the web site.