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Moraga Country Club's Members Support New Club House

By Sophie Braccini



Frank Melon shows where the new Club House will be located Photo Sophie Braccini

Moraga Country Club (MCC) needed more than 67% of its members to approve the construction of a new clubhouse. 72% of the homeowners and 82% of the golf associates approved the project. Staff is now starting on a process that will probably span over two years and get MCC larger, safer and more convenient facilities.

The new building will be located where the existing one is, on St Andrews Drive off Moraga Way. "The new building will have roughly the same footprint as the present Club," says Frank Melon, General Manager of the Club, "it will replace the existing structure and take some adjacent space where storage buildings are now located."

The preliminary designs show an elegant country resort. "We want to preserve the semi-rural character of Moraga, while giving to our members the high quality facility they deserve," says Melon.

"The existing club was designed in 1974 to serve five hundred families, we now have about 1150," says Janice Kolbe, who was President of the Board until very recently, "the building is outdated and worn out. We could not justify repairing and replacing parts of the declining structure, when a new building, with reallocated space, would better serve our needs."

A few years ago a more expensive project was rejected by a majority of the members, but it seems that this time more effort was put into informing all of the

stakeholders. "The consensus was built because the members were convinced of the true need for building replacement," explains Kolbe, "we spent a lot of time with an outreach program that was designed to communicate with each and every member. I believe that is how we got the project approved by such a large majority."

The new building will offer 19,000 to 20,000 square feet of facilities on two levels, which will more than double the existing construction. It will feature an improved kitchen, a member lounge and a larger dining room. "It will be a very user friendly entity," says Melon, "we want it to be able to withstand earthquakes as well as be as energy efficient as possible."

The budget of the project is \$9.5 million. "We are financially strong," explains Melon, "probably one of the strongest clubs in the East Bay." The General Manager attributes the Club's good results to the mix of homeowners and members that contribute to it. The 500 homeowners are each expected to contribute \$2,500 in capital assessment and all of the 377 golf members will see their dues increase by \$300 a year.

The first year will probably be spent in planning and going through a series of approvals. During construction the Club is expected to continue its normal operations. "I'm not too concerned about the disruption," says Kolbe, "there will be some interference, but I believe the golfers and tennis players will still have regular use of their facilities. The swimming pool will be disrupted for a short time. There will be temporary structures to provide minimal facilities for food, offices, etc. It's all temporary, and I believe the members will understand that."

In spite of the potential disturbance, Melon says that the level of excitement of the members and staff is very high, "the membership deserves something nice," he says, "and we see that project as very good for the local economy, we hope to put to work as many local people as possible and we will recycle as much as possible of the existing structure."

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