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## Moraga Residents Resist Proposed Stop Signs

*By Sophie Braccini*

The Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) heard three cases on July 1st that revolved around the proposed installation of new stop signs. None carried the support of the neighbors or of the Committee itself.

Although many residents like the idea of stop signs to slow down traffic, not all want them planted in front of their homes. In some instances, stop signs are just not the right device. As Chief of Police Robert Priebe humorously commented, "It might be linked to the semi-rural character of the town; folks here want to drive as fast as they can uninterrupted, as long as they don't hit anything."

A group of Larch Avenue residents worked for months to get stop signs installed at the intersections of Larch and Shuey, and Larch and Dickenson, in order to slow down traffic along the mostly straight route. According to the TSAC traffic calming guidebook, residents who want to see changes of that sort need to get approval of 75% of the neighbors living at the intersection; stop sign supporters were unable to hit the number. A majority of the residents along Larch voted for the signs, but at the Larch/Shuey intersection only 25% of the residents voted for it and only 50% at the Larch/Dickenson intersection.

"The main concern of these opposing residents was noise and loss of property value," said Robin Felix of the Larch Avenue group. But without stop signs, "All the property on Larch might lose value," said Felix, referring to a conversation she had with a real estate agent who explained to her that Larch was considered a high-speed road, and was therefore less appreciated. The group does not plan to continue its efforts at this time. "How many times do you want to hit your head against that wall?" asked Felix.

Another set of stop signs has been promoted by a group of residents in the Corliss neighborhood. The concern there is the safety of children crossing at Corliss and Wakefield to reach Los Perales Elementary School (LP). A three-way stop there is also supported by the LP Parent Teacher Association, but property owners residing at the intersection are ambivalent. "There are five neighbors living at the crossing," explained Connie Hayes who's been spearheading the effort, "Two said yes, one said no, and two said they could just favor temporary stop signs that would be there only when school is in session."

Priebe explained that according to traffic regulations, temporary stop signs are installed only in emergencies and that temporary signs at the Corliss/Wakefield intersection would be unenforceable.

He also suggested that removable signs would be an added hazard because kids could get use to having them there and forget to pay attention when the signs were not there.

Town staff agreed to send a letter to the Corliss group explaining the risks of temporary signs. With the letter in hand, the Corliss group plans to attempt further discussions with the reluctant neighbors.

The third project involving stop signs is at the crossing of Rheem Boulevard and Saint Mary's Road. TSAC has been working on improving the situation at this intersection with traffic consultant Fehr and Peers. One of the 5 solutions proposed by the consultant was 3-way stop signs. But both consultant and Committee agreed that stops there risked creating large back-ups and could even increase the risk of accidents. This alternative was not included in TSAC's recommendation to the City Council. Instead, they agreed to propose either a roundabout or left-turn pocket lanes to help turning vehicles. Due to the high cost of a roundabout, TSAC is seeking the Council's advice before proceeding with further study.

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