

Civic News Moraga



Public Meetings	
Town Council	Wednesday, February 24, 7:30 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
Special Tri-Agency Meeting	with MOFD and City of Orinda Wednesday, March 3, 7:00 pm Garden Room, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way
Planning Commission	Tuesday, March 1, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Design Review	Monday, March 8, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
 Town of Moraga online: www.moraga.ca.us
 Chamber of Commerce: www.moragachamber.org
 Moraga Citizens' Network: www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

Police Report



weapons. Thank you Wikipedia for the definition.

Traffic accident, 2/04/10 A 90-year old driver was driving his 1994 Toyota Camry on Moraga Road just past the high school. His vehicle drifted right and struck a Ford Explorer parked at the curb. Fortunately the incident occurred a bit after 4:00 so there weren't very many students around. Thankfully no one was injured.

E-mail scam, 2/01/10 Someone accessed a Woodminster Drive resident's e-mail account, then used the reporting person's name to send a mass email to all contacts - stating that the subject was in another country and needed money. This reporter received one of the requests. J.C. - I know you're not in London and didn't lose your wallet there.

D.U.I., 2/06/10 Police pulled the driver of a silver Honda over for driving erratically on Moraga Way near School Street. The 16-year-old male was driving while intoxicated; he had a blood alcohol level of .11, above the legal limit of .08. The young man was released to a family friend at the request of the driver's mom who was out of town.

Property turned in for destruction, 2/04/10 A Moraga citizen brought shurikens into the police department for disposal. This Japanese concealed weapon is more commonly known as a "throwing star." Not only do they protect and serve, they get rid of our

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New Appointees for Commissions and Boards

Returning incumbents take the lion's share

By Sophie Braccini



Lori Salamack and Jay Ingram (right side of photo) set up charts to facilitate the Council's discussion. Photo Sophie Braccini

For the Town of Moraga to have six applicants for four vacant chairs on the Planning Commission is not unusual; however, that the Town received 13 applications for 4 chairs on the Parks and Recreation Commission indicates uncommon enthusiasm for voluntary service to the Town, possibly due in part to the interest many dog owners have taken of late in that commission's proceedings. Despite the surge of new volunteers the Council, which interviewed all of the applicants between February 3rd and 9th, decided to reappoint the incumbents, who had all reapplied for their seats.

The two-year term on the Parks and Recreation Commission was up for Harry Crouch, John Haffner, Ravi Mallela and Karen

Reed. They were interviewed by the Council and asked to respond to six questions, as were the first-time applicants. The questions had to do with motivation, qualifications, position on environmental issues, tolerance for opposing views and listening skills, availability to serve and perception of the main issues the town would face in the future in the area of Parks and Recreation.

The Town Council expressed appreciation for the large number of highly qualified applicants who sought to serve. "It was a competitive process with a limited number of openings. As a result, some good people who had made a positive impression on the Council could not be appointed," said Council Member Dave Trotter. At the conclusion of the Council meeting,

Town Manager Mike Segrest said it would be appropriate for individual council members to contact applicants to informally encourage them to reapply when new openings come up next year.

The Council also decided to reappoint Commissioner Bruce Whitley to the Planning Commission for a fourth term, even though the usual maximum number of appointments is three. "An attorney with land use experience is valuable, based on my experience as a planning commissioner," said Council Member Mike Metcalf, "the slate of applicants for the Planning Commission does not have an attorney and Bruce leaving would leave the commission without that expertise." Planning Director Lori Salamack confirmed that the Council

could decide to invite him to serve for a 4th term if they found it to be beneficial to the town.

Commissioners Russell Driver and Stacia Levenfeld were reappointed as well. The Council chose Tom Richards to fill the fourth vacant seat. Richards, a father of two young children, presented himself as knowledgeable about land use through family experience. He declared a desire to protect open space, keep Moraga beautiful, but still support some development.

The Traffic Safety Advisory Committee's (TSAC) call for volunteers was not as fruitful; the Council was unable to fill all of the vacant seats. Metcalf wondered if it was time to disband it, but Council Member Howard Harpham argued it is a valuable committee. "There are still many neighborhood groups that would like to work with TSAC to resolve traffic issues," said Public Works Director and Town Engineer Jill Mercurio, who serves as the staff person on that committee, "Over the past two years the projects that came in front of us did not lead to actions because of lack of support by adjacent neighbors, that may have created a feeling of uselessness, when in fact the projects simply take longer to mature." The open positions on TSAC will be re-advertised; interested residents of Moraga are encouraged to apply.

MORAGA PARKS & RECREATION
 925-888-7045 • www.moraga.ca.us

Kid's Night Out

Friday March 5th, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
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Pruning Pear Trees

Connecting with the roots of agricultural Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

On the morning of February 13th, volunteers gathered with their tools at the corner of

Canyon and Camino Pablo, on land belonging to the Moraga School District, to help in the pruning of the pear orchard. Pear trees were planted in Moraga around 1900 as part of The Moraga Company Ranch. According to the history book, Moraga's Pride, "The Moraga Ranch boasted 100 acres in walnuts and 38 orchards in pears, apples, apricots and plums. At one time, the Moraga Company conducted the largest pear production operation under one management in the world."

Moraga's pears are no longer a commercial product, but many 100-year old trees are still around and thanks to the efforts of the Moraga Park Foundation (MPF), which takes care of them, some are producing hundreds of pounds of fruit each year that is given to local food banks.

The fact that most of the remaining pear orchards were left unkempt, and not producing anything except small and unpalatable fruit, struck Moraga residents Tom and Stephanie Smith who had been active in instituting the Moraga Pear Festival. They contacted the school district and received permission to prune the trees that grew on district land. When the Smiths left town in 2003, their mission was taken over by MPF. "The result of the pruning has been phenomenal," says MPF President Chuck Treat, "trees have been producing more fruit each year and last year we gave a record 16,000 pounds of pears to the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

The Bartlett pears that comprise the orchard do not require any watering and never see an ounce of chemical products. "In other parts of the country Bartlett trees need



Jonathan Rowland (left) and Ben Magidson, students from the Leadership class at JM, help with the pruning process. Photo Sophie Braccini

cross pollination, but in our area, they are self fertile, something to do with the climate and the soil," says Lawrence Bennett, a Moraga resident and landscape contractor. Pruning is all they require. "The operation is quite simple," adds Bennett, "what we do is cut out the suckers that grow around the trunk, and remove the dead or crowded branches."

Dead wood is quite easy to spot because it does not bear buds; crowding means that the volunteers are asked to remove branches that are too close or crossing each other. The proper way to prune is to cut the branch close to the trunk, leaving about 1/8 of an inch in order not to scar the bark of the trunk. At the base of the tree, the suckers were cut at ground level. Every year it takes about four hours to complete the work. When done, a large stack of cuttings is piled on the school's

property.

"We add our own cuttings to the pile and then hire a contractor to chip it and take it away," explains Rick Schafer, the Superintendent of the Moraga School District, who adds that the district is happy to see MPF taking charge of both pruning and harvesting. "We are not in the farming business, and without the Foundation the pears would go to waste," says Schafer, "MPF gets the insurance and they provide the equipment; this works very well for us." As to how long this will continue, the Superintendent remains elusive. "The Governing Board has chosen not to sell the property at this time," says Schafer, "it is too small to put in a sports field, the way it is laid out it is not optimal, and only 2.2 acre out of 3 are usable because of the creek." However, the School Board may one day have a use for that land.

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