



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published March 30st, 2010

## Tension Lingers as Town and School Reach Agreement

*By Sophie Braccini*

The Town of Moraga and the Moraga School District have reached an agreement regarding the renovation of the sports field at Camino Pablo Elementary School using most of the Town's \$737,587 in grant money from the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) Measure WW fund. But it took many public and subcommittee meetings to get the local agencies on the same page. Since the Town decided to stop contributing to the maintenance of the District's sports fields in 2009, a prolonged mistrust has clouded its relationship with the District.

The District created the latest setback when it required a third-party inspection before accepting the renovated field. If the inspection determined that the improvements to the field did not meet the agreed specifications, "the Property shall not be made available for Town Use as contemplated by the Agreement." The Council was concerned that this provision might be a deterrent to the EBRPD's approval of the disbursement of funds to Moraga, and a subcommittee was formed to resolve the differences.

At the Council meeting Council Member Dave Trotter, who served on the sub-committee for the Town with Manager Mike Segrest, explained that the subcommittee agreed on the addition of a public hearing should a dispute arise. He believed that this guaranteed the fairness of the process. Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram added that a preliminary discussion with EBRPD about the terms of the agreement led him to believe that they would find the agreement acceptable.

But Council Member Mike Metcalf asked, "Why is the school district so protective? Is there a lack of trust?"

Superintendent Richard Schafer responded that MSD had fiduciary responsibility toward the students and that the document would protect the District; then the elephant in the room was exposed, "Maybe there is an element of mistrust that came from the town removing its support for the maintenance of the fields," added Schafer.

In 2009, the Town decided to phase out its support of the maintenance of the District's sports fields that are widely used for recreation programs. In these difficult financial times the Town determined that all recreation activities needed to be self-sustaining. A few months later, applying the same logic, MSD updated its fee structure for renting its facilities and decided to charge the Town for the use of the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School auditorium in which the Council's meetings are held. At the end of the discussion on March 25th, Schafer concluded, "this agreement may be an improvement in the right direction."

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA