

Civic News



Moraga

Public Meetings	
Town Council	Wednesday, October 13, 7:30 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
Planning Commission	Monday, October 4, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Design Review	Tuesday, October 12, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Liaison	Friday, October 8, 8:00 am Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way

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 •



Computer swiped, 9/20/10
 Sometime between 12:30 a.m. and 4:10 a.m. someone reached through the conveniently open ground floor window of an apartment in Thille Hall at Saint Mary's and took an Apple Mac-Book computer. It had been charging on the desk next to the window when the student-owner went to bed after midnight. The victim and roommates woke up to the noise of shutters moving and a propped up guitar as it fell at just after 4:00. The charging cord was the only thing left hanging out the window.

Suspicious fire 9/20/10
 Moraga cops lent a hand to assist Moraga-Orinda Fire Department on a "suspicious" fire behind a home on Camino Ricardo. A professional fire investigator classified the fire as "suspicious, likely caused by human." Kids playing with matches? Early afternoon barbecue going rouge?

Driver surrender, 9/18/10
 At just after 2:00 in the afternoon a Moraga officer noticed a vehicle belonging to a subject with a suspended driver's license traveling on Viader, near Country Club Drive. Even though the cop did not use a siren or flash lights the car mysteriously moved to the side of the roadway. The driver knew he was busted - he had a suspended license and shouldn't have been driving. The driver was cited. Only in Moraga, a polite, drama-free infraction.

Teen Dance Confrontation, 8/28/10
 At 11:00 p.m. the parent of a 16-year-old girl told police that while his daughter was in the dance area of the New Rheem Theatre, an unknown male pushed her up against the wall and removed her skirt. The male threw away the skirt nearby. The victim had shorts on under the skirt. The concerned parent wanted to alert security staff that was monitoring the dance. This item was inadvertently left out of the last Moraga blotter.

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Jill Keimach: Moraga's New Town Manager

By Sophie Braccini



Jill Keimach addresses the Town Council on Sept. 22nd Photo Andy Schreck

The Moraga Town Council has approved the appointment of a new Town Manager. Jill Keimach (pronounce kaimæk), currently Fremont's Community Development Director, will take the helm on November 1st.

Mike Segrest, who announced last May that he intended to step down from the Town Manager post for personal reasons, said the Council made a great choice. Keimach will be Moraga's third Town Manager in two years.

The Council was unanimous in its choice, and the members spoke very positively about Keimach. "She was one of our two final candidates and even though she does not have experience as a town manager per se, she is very

knowledgeable about economic development and has a very strong financial background," said Council Member Dave Trotter.

"She is taking a very significant pay cut to come to Moraga," said Mayor Ken Chew, "but she wants to work here, already knows the community and the college, and the Council feels that she will be very good for Moraga." According to Chew, Keimach combines very strong training and experience in development, coupled with a tough but approachable personality.

Keimach made the short drive from Berkeley to attend the Pear Festival with her husband. "I applied for the Town Manager position in Moraga because I share many of the values of this commu-

nity," she says. As Fremont's Community Development Director, Kiemach managed a budget much bigger than Moraga's and had a staff of over 100 people.

The extent of Keimach's experience is impressive. For example, if we can bring bikes on BART trains, we owe it to her. After working for the Association of Bay Area Governments, she moved on to BART and was in charge of the bicycle project. According to her, there was a lot of negotiating with the different stakeholders involved in that project.

Keimach is also responsible for bring Trader Joe's to El Cerrito. As that city's Community Development Director, she conducted negotiation with Regency Centers, the owner of the aging El Cerrito Plaza Shopping Center, to be able to get the tenant that the community wanted.

Keimach worked in Fremont for six years, where one of her big projects was the installation of the Solyndra solar energy manufacturing and administrative facilities that President Obama visited last May.

Public service is definitely in Keimach's blood. Most of her career was spent in that sector, but for a three-year period she worked on the other side of the fence as a development consultant. "I learned a lot in that job," she said "and it makes me sympathetic to what developers have to go through; but what I want to do is weigh the pros and cons of projects and decide

what is good for the community." From this diversity of experience Keimach developed a business-friendly attitude that was a definite asset in Fremont. "When I arrived, the city had the reputation of not being business-friendly," remembers Keimach, "business applications could take up to a year. It was not a matter of regulations, more a culture of 'we know better than the private sector how to do things.'"

Keimach says her business-friendly reputation is why Fremont approached her. "We had focus groups and interviewed previous applicants to understand where the problems came from," says Keimach. Of course she didn't change the culture overnight, but consistently worked on it. "We created a partnership-based approach where everybody would get together within 72 hours of an application, assign a staff person to it, and meet with the developer early on to understand what their vision is," she explains, "since then we got some big projects that the city is proud of."

From her career tales emerges an image of a woman who listens to what the community wants and is able to bring the different stakeholders to the table to build win-win scenarios. For a divided Moraga that has been struggling with the conflicting agendas of semi-rural feel and economic vitality, Keimach could be the catalyst for finding solutions.

Please submit Letters and Opinions:
letters@lamorindaweekly.com

Dollar Tree Going to Town Council

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The applicant and Kimco Realty, the property owner, found these conditions objectionable. Residents opposed to the store stated after the meeting that they would appeal the decision, but Dollar Tree beat them to the punch by filing an appeal the very next day.

The Town Council will probably take up the matter at its October 13 meeting. Public attendance is anticipated, since the Council will consider the matter de novo, meaning it will be addressing the issue as if hearing about it for the very first time.

About 30 residents came to the Planning Commission meeting prepared for battle, and most of them reiterated their opposition to the project. Familiar arguments were made, such as anxiety on the part of property owners who fear further decreases in their property values. As long time resident George Atashkarian put it, "Decrepit neighborhood and Dollar Store go hand in hand; I do not know what comes first."

Opponents came armed with creative displays to support their opposition. Resident Cavan McCarthy had assembled presentation boards showing CVS and Dollar Tree products side by side. "For example, I bought a package of Doritos at a Dollar Tree at 30 cents per ounce, while at CVS a package costs 21 cents per ounce," she said,

"they are not selling anything cheap, it's just more packaging and smaller portions."

Others opponents presented arguments related to Moraga's legal documents. Resident Holly Erickson-King, referring to Lafayette's guidelines, urged, "Let's adopt a retail plan for Moraga before the Dollar Tree defines it for us."

Resident Kathy Macchi argued that the store would go against some of the principles of Moraga's General Plan regarding the retail community, such as civic and community involvement, or quality that should enhance the character of the community.

Arguments such as the above will likely form part of the basis for the opponents' appeal.

The commissioners were impressed by the volume of opposition to the store. "In all of my seven years on the Planning Commission there have only been a couple of occurrences when the public outcry has been this loud," said Commissioner Bruce Whitley.

In the end, the commissioners had to put their emotional responses aside and a majority of them felt that nothing in the Town's code justified denying the application. They decided instead to set conditions of approval, largely around conditions they felt the store needed to alleviate in order to avoid a negative impact on neighboring stores. They agreed to require

"showroom quality" fixtures, limited signage size and the height of merchandise displayed in the windows, and made general recommendations on tidiness and recycling. Planning Director Lori Salamack indicated that most of the conditions the Commission decided to apply to the new tenant have already been applied to other retail operations in the Rheem Center, such as Tuesday Morning and Goodwill Industries.

Linda Duncan, Real Estate Manager for Dollar Tree stores in Northern California, said that the conditions were unacceptable. When Commissioner Tom Richards asked what conditions were troubling her; she replied that she had been asked by her corporate lawyer not to discuss the matter.

John Welter, Director of Real Estate for Kimco Realty, who spoke in support of his potential tenant, proposed that the Town's and Dollar Tree's lawyers meet to discuss the conditions. Planning Commissioner Bruce Whitley answered, "Do we want to confer with the Dollar Tree? We do - and this is the place to do it," he stated, "but Dollar Tree was almost absent from these discussions; we never had an operations person here to discuss, for example, shelving. I am shocked that the Dollar Tree thought so little of the town that they did not want to participate in the process."

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