

Civic News




Moraga

Public Meetings	
Town Council	Wednesday, February 9, 7:30 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
Planning Commission	Monday, February 7, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Design Review	Monday, February 14, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
Tri-City Meeting	Thursday, February 10, 7:00 pm Joint meeting with Lafayette and Orinda at Saint Mary's College, Soda Center
Liaison	Friday, February 11, 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 •



Science gone bad, 1/20/11 After a science experiment at Camino Pablo School several students reported having difficulty breathing. The fifth grade kids were conducting a litmus test that involved bleach, vinegar, dish soap, baking soda, salt and milk of magnesia. Affected students were checked at the scene and released, although one student was transported to Kaiser in Walnut Creek.

Inheritance hoax, 1/20/11 A Butterfield Place resident told officers he received a letter from a British attorney stating he may be entitled to funds from a person who recently passed away in the United Kingdom, since they had the same last name. Unfortunately he sent the requested fee to cover the cost of the legal transaction to Barclay's Bank in the U.K., but he has yet to receive his "inheritance."

Lost & Found, Found iPod and jewelry: On 1/23 A very honest 14-year-old boy found an Apple iPod under a bench near the skate park. On 1/21 a woman turned in a bracelet, earrings and five rings found near the trail across from Saint Mary's College. Lost phone and wallet: On 1/24 a woman left her cell phone unattended inside the Madigan Gym during the afternoon, upon her return it was gone. On 1/12 between 9:45 and 11:00 a fellow reported he lost his wallet at Safeway, it contained a driver's license, BART pass, \$10 cash and bank cards.

Mugging at Gunpoint, 1/24/11 A woman came to the lobby of the Police Department to report someone pointed a handgun at her while she was in the rear parking lot at the Rheem Valley Shopping Center and took her money and cell phone. Despite a search by officers from Moraga, Lafayette, Orinda, Walnut Creek and the California Highway Patrol, the suspect hasn't been located at this time.



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- Dog Training 2/23



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Moraga Developments Move Forward

By Sophie Braccini

It was a very good two weeks for those who want to see more rooftops and more action in Moraga. The Planning Commission acted on two proposals that affect very visible and historic locations, while on January 26th the Town Council approved a plan to construct 27 residences on the hills of Moraga.

Although probably not the beginning of a huge construction spree, these projects are likely to have a significant impact on the future development of the town; the beginnings of revitalization can be expected, while some residents remain concerned that the approval of buildings on, or too close to, ridge lines is a dangerous precedent for a town that cherishes its open views.

Downtown Area Projects in the Planning Phase

On the night of January 18th, the Planning Commission discussed one proposed project on Moraga Road, across from the Rheem Center, and approved another at the historic Barn, which is at the corner of Viader and Country Club Drive. The projects are very different in nature and stage of development, but if they materialize as proposed they have the potential to significantly contribute to the revitalization of the downtown area. "This was one of the best Planning Commission meetings of my life," said Planning Director Lori Salamack after the fact. "We have a very talented and experienced Planning Commission and they did a superb job."

Chris Avant, who presented a modification of his Barn-café project, appeared to be touched by the

number of people who came to the meeting in his support. Members of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, a local architect, and residents, all spoke in support of Avant's plan to have the ground floor of the building open from 6:00 a.m. to midnight, offering healthy finger foods and wine-tasting. The Planning Commission voted almost unanimously to support the project. Commissioner Bruce Whitley opposed the project on the basis of parking concerns.

"I am invigorated by the support of the community," said Avant after the meeting, "and I plan to open the Barn to the public during the summer of 2011." Last year Avant received approval to open a wine bar in the Barn from 4:00 p.m. to midnight. An extension of the permitted hours, and appealing to different groups of customers, made sense to Avant as he developed his business plan. "This will invigorate the businesses in this part of town and will hopefully be beneficial (to existing businesses)," said Avant.

Jim Knappe, along with his sons and his architect, followed Avant with a presentation of his project. The Knappe family owns the barren two-acre lot adjacent to its 5A Rent-A-Space storage facility on Moraga Road; the lot is currently zoned "agricultural only," and Knappe was on a scouting expedition to find out if a plan to build an apartment/condominium complex on the site stood a chance of being approved. The Commission raised concerns about peak hour traffic, pedestrian flow and over-

flow parking for residents; but agreed that such a development made sense, indicating that Knappe's first priority should be to have the area re-zoned.

The 40 units proposed by the Knappe family would be one or two bedroom condos/apartments stacked on three levels with a parking garage on the first floor—the concept was presented as a housing option for Saint Mary's students, staff and the local workforce. According to the Knappes, this is the only viable solution for the property. "We've studied everything," said Jim Knappe during the study session with the Commission, "the market in Moraga could not support a hotel, and more retail, in view of existing empty spaces, does not make economic sense." The Planning Commissioners agreed with Knappe; Commission Chair Jim Obsitnik added "if we want a vibrant retail, we need more people."

Rancho Laguna Project Approved

On January 26th the Town Council approved, by a vote of 2-1, the development of 27 homes on the hilly property known as Rancho Laguna along Rheem Boulevard. A previous approval by the Planning Commission in August of 2009 was appealed by a group of residents who challenged its consistency with the General Plan. Their position was that some of the homes would significantly alter the natural setting, not to mention being located too close to ridge lines. Almost a year and a half of discussions and iterations brought forward a much-modified project. "I think that most people will be

pleased when they look at the concessions that were made on both sides," said Town Manager Jill Keimach after the meeting.

Rancho Laguna is a 180-acre property located on the eastern section of Rheem Boulevard, towards Saint Mary's Road, where cows now roam. The approved development consists of eight homes along Rheem Boulevard, and 19 on the upper plateau located on the southeast portion of the lot.

Along the road to approval various aspects of the projects have been addressed, including the preservation of the creek, the removal of an access road that impacted the creek, and the visual impact of the project.

Moraga resident Suzanne Jones, speaking on behalf of the appellant group, indicated that the modified project presented by staff could be acceptable, in spite of remaining concerns, if one specific lot was moved. That lot, located on the southeastern side of the upper plateau, is located on or very close to what the group considers to be a ridge line.

Dave Trotter was the only Council member to oppose the new plan, and did so on the basis that the location of the one controversial lot was not compliant with the General Plan; Mayor Karen Mendonca and Council Member Howard Harpham approved the plan. Vice-Mayor Mike Metcalf and Council Member Ken Chew had to recuse themselves from the discussion since they live too close to the proposed development.

Meet New Officer Mary Ann Grubb

By Sophie Braccini

Mary Ann Grubb is a no-nonsense woman who knows what she wants and goes out and gets it. A passionate coach and teacher for the first 12 years of her career, she decided to become what she had always wanted to be—a police officer—"Once I got the coaching out of my system," she explains. Now Grubb patrols the streets of Moraga, mostly on weekend nights, one of the tough shifts on which newcomers must make their debut.

Grubb attended Carondelet High School in Concord and Santa Clara University for her BA degree; she now lives in Walnut Creek. She said she always wanted to become a police officer, but she fell in love with coaching cross country. "I didn't want to give coaching up," she said, "so I taught math for 12 years, as a means to get to coach."

Grubb says that the pride of coaching resides in taking young athletes who, at the beginning of the



Officer Grubb with Lieutenant Price

Photo Sophie Braccini

season will run 2 miles in 19 minutes but after 2 1/2 months of training will cover the distance in 13 minutes. "The progress of kids is fantastic," she says, "it gives them confidence, and being a big kid myself, I love hanging out with them." Grubb enjoyed coaching varsity as well and recounts with pride the many wins of her teams.

In 2009 she decided it was time to become a police officer and she put herself through the Napa Valley College Police Academy, a six-month program she found very

rigorous. "It was a positive experience," she said, "I learned a lot about myself and police work." She notes that the program enforces a very strict discipline, "You find out if you are tough enough to come back the next day." In her class of 50 (five of whom were women), 30 graduated (three of them women).

Grubb was recruited by the Moraga Police Department in August of 2010. "I received other offers, but then those departments went into a hiring freeze," she says, "it's not that there is no need for more police officers, it's that there is no money to hire them." Some of her classmates have not found police jobs yet.

Grubb says she has found a good fit for herself in Moraga. "There are a lot of plusses in a small department," she says, "you get to know the people quickly, the learning curve is pretty good, you do a lot of the leg work." She works the graveyard shift from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. over the weekend, three or four days in a row, "The Chief (Bob Priebe) works that shift too," she says, "it's great to see him work; it's the best way to learn."



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