

Moraga

Civic News

Public Meetings

Town Council
Wednesday, May 25, 7:00 pm
Wednesday, June 8, 7:00 pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission
Monday, June 6, 7:30 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Design Review
Monday, June 13, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Liaison
Friday, June 10, 8:00 am
Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:
www.moraga.ca.us

Chamber of Commerce:
www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:
www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



Police Report

Teenager refusing to do chores, 5/16/11 Extra extra - Corliss Drive resident called police to report that the subject's 13-year-old daughter was upset about doing household chores, to the point that she physically threatened her mom. Just a verbal altercation, no injuries. Is 13 too old for a time out? How about losing phone privileges?

D.U.I. 5/15/11 At 2:30 in the morning cops stopped a car travelling south on Moraga Road, going 56 m.p.h. in a 35 m.p.h. The 35-year-old Moraga resident, who should have called a cab, displayed objective signs of alcohol intoxication. Coming home from the Round Up?

Credit Card Fraud, 5/13/11 An unauthorized unknown person used a Moraga resident's Chase Visa card and made purchases at four Walgreens stores in Berkeley. The person who reported the loss, never actually lost the credit card. She wisely suspects that she is a victim of credit card fraud.

Uncontrollable Youth, 5/12/11 Campolindo High School reported an uncontrollable juvenile. Apparently a 16-year-old student left school grounds without permission after being sent to the principal's office for disciplinary reasons. The school just wanted to document the event. She's got some 'splaining to do.

Theft at SMC, 4/26/11 Some-time between 4/26/11 and 5/05/11 five brand new laptop computers were taken from a Saint Mary's College secured storage area. Nothing else was taken. Methinks the storage area was not all that secure.

Drunk college student, 5/07/11 How unusual...a 20-year-old St. Mary's College student, while attending the Galapalooza festival was placed under Citizen's arrest for public intoxication by a St. Mary's Public Officer. They alerted M.P.D and the subject was taken by Moraga police to the Martinez Detention Facility.



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A Chamber the Council Can Call its Own?

By Sophie Braccini

For many years, the Moraga Town Council has held its public meetings in the auditorium at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School. The venue was once made available to the Council at no charge, but that changed when the Town decided to stop paying a portion of the maintenance costs for the Moraga School District's sports fields and suggested to the district's governing board that the fields' various users should be responsible for their upkeep. Since what's good for the goose is good for the gander, the district now charges the Town a use fee for the auditorium.

Moraga Town Manager Jill Keimach saw the current seismic retrofitting of the Town's office building at 329 Rheem Boulevard as a cost-effective opportunity to add a Council Chamber to the building so the Town could hold its public meetings free of rent. "Assuming long-term average rent and personnel/overtime costs increase three percent per year, the (current) annual cost of \$14,280 compounds to \$163,704 in ten years," said Keimach of the use fee charged for the school auditorium.

Keimach presented five variations of a chamber-building plan to the Town Council on May 11 and asked council members to select two,

which could be brought back for further discussion and financing strategy. Some members of the council indicated that spending money for a meeting room was not wise at this time, when Moraga residents are likely to be asked to make financial contributions for such things as infrastructure maintenance in the near future (see sidebar).

Most Town staff, including the police, are housed in the building at 329 Rheem. Keimach's proposal would be to reconfigure the first floor to add a large meeting room. Option (a) with 77 seats would add \$170,000 to the cost of the retrofit and option (b) with 105 seats, would add \$260,000. "Since we are doing the seismic retrofit, reconfiguring the space at this time is very cost effective," said Keimach. She added that 90% of council meetings attract less than 60 people. "The downside of Rheem is parking," noted Keimach, "we would have to negotiate an agreement with the owners of the large parking areas across the street."

The other Town properties studied were the Hacienda de las Flores and the library. Both were rejected for reasons of mix-use and/or building cost.

Council members were divided on the issue. "Let's ask the Rheem Theater, Saint Mary's College or

Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church (for meeting space) before spending that kind of money," said Council Member Howard Harpham. "I have a problem about spending a quarter of a million dollars when we need to repair pot holes," added Council Member Dave Trotter. "I'm concerned about the cost," agreed Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf, "we should challenge Jill (Keimach) to try to develop it a bit smaller and identify funding ideas."

Mayor Karen Mendonca and Council Member Ken Chew supported building the larger meeting

room of option (b). Mendonca later explained, "I believe in the Buster Brown Shoes philosophy my parents taught me as a kid," she said, "if you get it cheap, you have to buy it again and it ends up costing more."

Keimach is hoping to bring the project back to the Council at the end of June or early July, complete with financing options. "If the decision for the retrofit is made this summer, the drawings will be done in the fall, and after the permits are issued, construction should start in the spring of 2012," she said.

60% of Moraga Voters Support Pot Hole Measure

Late last week, Godge Research released the results of a study commissioned by the Town of Moraga to assess residents' priorities in the areas of infrastructure maintenance, streets and storm drains. With a 5.6 percent margin of error, the results show that voters are either definitely (33 percent) or probably (27 percent) in favor of a potential measure for pothole and neighborhood street repairs. 300 potential voters, selected as being representative of the population as a whole, were surveyed between March 26 and April 1st. "Given the 60 percent base of support among voters for a Moraga Pothole and Repair Measure, we believe that the Town of Moraga should continue the process," concluded the Consultant's executive summary. Predictions are that without a measure to finance repairs, the condition of Moraga's streets and roads will decline and the cost of repairs will increase by 300 percent in 10 years. The next phase of this project will be for the Town to engage in community outreach regarding street repairs and maintenance issues. S.Braccini

Small Town v. Federal Government

Moraga Town Council opposes closure of Country Club post office

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Town Council is joining the fight against the planned closure of the post office on Country Club Drive. The Council was not consulted, nor even officially informed, about the United States Postal Service's (USPS) decision to close the branch near the Moraga Center and it has little say in the matter, "It's David against Goliath," commented Chief of Police Bob Priebe; united against a rare common enemy, the Council decided to take a stand.

"The (USPS) personnel that conducted the public meeting on April 19, 2011, obviously had no knowledge of the situation in this town," said Mayor Karen Mendonca, "they were not informed of the developments that are planned

in that area, or of the fact that this post office is close to two retirement homes populated with residents that have limited mobility." (Read our report about that meeting at www.lamorindaweekly.com.)

The Council indicated that closing the Country Club post office did not make good economic sense because, as the USPS itself admits, it's a profitable branch. Council members noted that the closure of that office would add extra car trips for residents of Moraga and north Orinda. They wondered if such environmental consequences should be reviewed under a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedure.

NEPA, enacted in 1970, requires

federal agencies to incorporate environmental considerations in their planning and decision-making through a systematic interdisciplinary approach. Specifically, all federal agencies must prepare detailed statements assessing the environmental impact of and alternatives to major federal actions significantly affecting the environment. The Town's attorney was asked to check if the closure of the post office could be subject to NEPA regulations.

The Council also decided to send a formal letter to the Postal Service and elected officials to push their agenda. Staff had readied a long, descriptive letter that council members deemed "too polite."

"We are outraged," said Vice

Mayor Michael Metcalf. "We want to be punchy and stay civil," said Mendonca. A revised letter was mailed on May 17, and the mayor agreed to place a call to Congressman John Garamendi.

Town Manager Jill Keimach, who previously worked in Fremont, recounted how residents there saved a post office branch that was scheduled to close: "What made the difference was that people literally flooded the Postal Service with letters." Public opposition was so overwhelming that the postal administration reversed the decision. Keimach appeared perplexed at the half dozen residents who showed up at the meeting to voice their concerns.

Joint Session Meeting Didn't Go to the Dogs

By Cathy Dausman

A joint session of the Moraga Town Council and Park and Recreation Commission was straightforward, mostly on time and fairly lightly attended May 11.

The sudden entrance of eight Moraga Police Department staff late in the joint meeting raised a few eye-

brows. Two on-duty and six off-duty officers appeared, fanning out at parade rest along the back wall. Turns out they were only there for moral support. Chief Robert Priebe and his staff were honored with a proclamation during National Police Week.

Priebe says it is important the

public understands that even though Moraga doesn't experience a high rate of violent crime police work is still dangerous. "I am very proud of the work our officers are doing and the positive attitude they continue to maintain. Due to limited manpower, we have all been required to do more, and everyone has responded," he said.

The final new business item, a Rancho Laguna Park Spatial Separation Proposal, aka the dog park and fencing issue, was little more than an update. Lamorinda Dogs Director Robert Blits announced his group has

raised \$14,000 for fencing, but no one yet knows "what the fence is going to look like." He said Rancho Laguna Park may need fencing regardless of its dog park status because Assembly Bill 1144 requires fenced playgrounds within 200 feet of a hazard. The bill defines a hazard to include close proximity (200 feet or less) to parking lots or roadways. Blits stated that Rancho Laguna Park playgrounds are within that 200 feet parameter. Neither Town Manager Jill Keimach nor Blits could say who would pay for state-mandated fencing.

LILO SPEAKS:
A Memoir
with Tom Adams

BOOK SIGNING

Meet Lilo Heller and Tom Adams
Sunday, June 12, 1-3pm
Oakwood Health Club
Wine and hors d'oeuvres to be served

For more information contact Michael Heller
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