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## Town Muffles the Sound of Music

*By Sophie Braccini*

A recent court decision served to inform the Town of Moraga that it could not exempt itself from its own sound ordinance. Town Manager Jill Keimach indicated that the exemption was being rescinded from the ordinance, "The Town is subject to the same regulation as everyone else," she said, "we are testing the noise at every concert, mitigating the impacts of the sound, and will make sure that the concerts stay in the park, while its neighbors are satisfied."

Lew Edwards has spoken at different public meetings to complain about the noise made by the concert. "I live less than 1000 feet away from the Commons Park where the concerts are held every Thursday night in summer," says the outspoken gentleman, "I remember two years ago when the concerts played at night, it was so loud that I couldn't play my own music. When it started, it could literally blow me out of my chair. This year, during the Fourth of July evening concert, my wife asked me 'aren't they going to have music this year?'" So the couple came down to the park to hear the music and see the fireworks.

"We have worked with a sound specialist to make sure that the music can be heard loud and clear in the park, but stays there," says Jay Ingram, Parks and Recreation Director. Five sound absorbing, 7x4 foot panels have been fixed to the ceiling over the musicians; a heavy curtain now hangs behind the performers; speakers are set no more than 105 inches from the ground and are angled so the sound goes toward the hill, not the sky; one of the two subwoofers (the loudspeaker that produces very low bass frequencies, the 'thump-thump' deep vibration) was removed and the other one is set in front of the stage, on the grass. Ingram adds that a sound technician is hired to monitor the sound throughout the summer. "We can still hear when the concerts are playing," says Edwards, "but it is not a problem anymore."

The Moraga resident is still concerned about private parties, but the Town seems determined to be perceived as a good neighbor. "We can rent the park once a month for private celebrations," responds Ingram, "but the organizers have to abide by the same sound standard we do, and we need a document submitted by their sound professional in order to approve the rental."

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