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Civic News Moraga, Orinda

Separating Kids and Dogs at Rancho Laguna Park

By Sophie Braccini

The recent dismantlement of the playgrounds that were located on each side of the large expanse of grass at Rancho Laguna Park has caused a reshuffling of the cards among the different users of the park—and the issue of kids and off-leash dogs has come under discussion once again.

After months of controversy between the Town and Lamorinda Dogs, the organized proponents of having a place where dogs may run off-leash, the parties had agreed to share the lawn, giving each group its own hours to enjoy the grass field.

But when a recent decision was made to replace only one of the existing play structures, a whole new possibility emerged: the chance to create a separate, 24-hour, fenced dog park along one side of the park, leaving the grass area always available to sports groups. The stakeholders are just starting a new round of

discussions with the Parks and Recreation Commission; the Town Council will make the final decision.

Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram wants the Town to have its own sports field. "The Town of Moraga has a responsibility to offer fields for seasonal sports," says Ingram, "There are fields in town that belong to the school district, but none that belong to the Town. Having another sports field also provides alternatives and allows the existing ones to rest and not degrade because of over use."

Rancho Laguna Park is being largely used this summer for sports camps, and will be used again for that purpose in the fall.

"We are in our first year as a new soccer club in the Lamorinda area. We will be using Rancho Laguna Park this September for practices," says East Bay Eclipse Soccer Club Director Shane Carney, "I originally (wanted) to use

the park all fall, but we couldn't work out a schedule where we could practice without dogs being on the field."

Carney, who led the Campolindo boys' soccer team to three titles this season, believes that the field is good for any age group, but he adds that sports users need to make room to accommodate dogs. "I think including a dog park in the plan as well is much more beneficial to the community as a whole," he says.

In addition to how the remodeling of the park will be financed, the size and fencing of the off-leash dog area are also issues that need to be worked through.

"We plan on having a few proposals prepared for discussion at the next Parks and Recreation meeting," said Lamorinda Dogs' Bill Carman. The next Parks and Recreation Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 16, 7:00 p.m., at the Hacienda de las Flores.

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The Hacienda Foundation's Sharon Metcalf relaxes for a few moments on the new bench in the La Sala building at the Hacienda de las Flores that she upholstered; the bench was built by her husband, Moraga council member Mike Metcalf. Sharon and other Foundation and Kiwanis members recently freshened up the building where many community meetings are held. The Foundation's mission is to maintain and improve the beautiful building. At this time the Foundation is developing a master plan for a nine-acre park and seeking new board members. Residents with interest, expertise or experience in architecture, historical preservation, engineering or contracting are encouraged to join the board. Those who are simply interested in working to improve the Hacienda are most welcome to contact the Foundation as well. For more information visit www.haciendafoundation.org.

Photo Sophie Braccini

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Mike Stallings Appointed Interim Parks and Recreation Director

By Diana LaScala Gruenewald



Mike Stallings

Photo Ohlen Alexander

Orinda's Director of Parks and Recreation, Todd V. Skinner, will retire at the end of this month. Skinner originally worked for Recreation District Six, which covered Orinda before it became a city. Since that time he has served successfully for a full thirty years. After Skinner retires, a new director must be recruited; an interim director will perform Skinner's usual duties during the recruitment and selection process.

The Orinda City Council recently moved to approve the selection of Mike Stallings as interim director. Stallings was one of two candidates referred to the City by the consulting

firm Municipal Resource Group (MRG) which specializes in assisting local governments. Stallings is an experienced parks and recreation director who has worked for Daly City, Reedy, Grover Beach and West Covina. He has served as President of the California Parks and Recreation Society (CPRS), District Director, Treasurer, Founding President and Student Advisor to CPRS.

Stallings will fill the post of Director of Parks and Recreation until he is succeeded by a permanent candidate. He will start on Monday August 1st and his contract will expire on January 31, 2012.



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