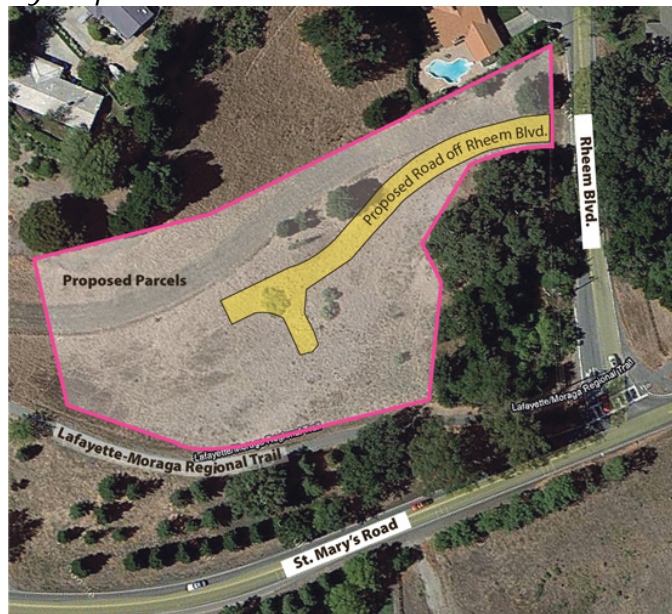


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Tonight: Moraga Town Council to Discuss Selling Open Space

By Sophie Braccini



Map image courtesy maps.Google.com, proposed site overlay based on information provided by Moraga Planning Department; edited by Andy Scheck

General Plan." His position was echoed by the other four commissioners in attendance.

"Looking at this project for the third time and walking along the trail again was an eye opener," said Commissioner Stacia Levenfeld, "This project would take away from Moraga's real character; it does not feel right."

During the public comments portion of the meeting, Barbara Onoda, speaking on behalf of the non-profit Preserve Lamorinda Open Space, said, "We do not think it is appropriate for the Town to undertake subdivision and development of open-space lands which belong to the citizens of Moraga, particularly lands such as these that are enjoyed daily by a large number of trail users."

The Staff Report, prepared by Senior Planner Richard Chamberlain and Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read, points out that the subdivision would not be consistent with a number of policies in the Town's General Plan. The report reads in part, "The potential subdivision would cluster housing in a visually prominent location.....The potential subdivision would also result in residential development of existing publicly-owned open space, rather than preserving new open space."

Planning Commissioner Bruce Whitley was the only one to partially disagree with the Staff Report. "Some elements of the General Plan are missing in the report," he said, "There are many policies that would support the project, such as improved traffic and safety in some parts of the town." Whitley nonetheless concluded, "We should not recommend that piece of property for development."

The two acres in question are part of a 20-acre parcel that the Town acquired, along with the adjoining parcel that became the Moraga Commons Park, from the State of California in 1977 when the State discontinued plans to build a freeway through the town.

The Moraga Town Council meets tonight at 7:00 p.m. in the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium, 1010 Camino Pablo.

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Tonight the Moraga Town Council will consider if it wants to proceed with a tentative subdivision map in order to sell a portion of Town-owned property located along the Lafayette-Moraga Trail near the corner of Saint Mary's Road and Rheem Boulevard.

The cash-strapped Town needs money for infrastructure and capital improvements. The Moraga Parks and Recreation Commission, the East Bay Regional Park District, and five members of the Moraga Planning Commission oppose the subdivision of the property.

In late September the Parks and Recreation Commission unanimously passed a motion recommending the site not be subdivided or sold, citing the special nature of the area and concerns around the preservation of publicly-owned open space. At its meeting on October 3, the Planning Commission left no ambiguity as far as each member's opinion regarding the sale of approximately two acres of open space. Not wanting to 'box in' the Council regarding the final decision, the Planning Commission did not vote on the project but instead forwarded their individual comments against the subdivision to the Council.

"The profile of the trail in Lafayette may be more urban, but in Moraga, the idea of developing along the trail is troubling," said Planning Commission Chair Russell Driver. "The project would have no benefit for the public. If the applicant was a private property owner I would advise not to do it, it goes against the spirit of the