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## Council Okays Creation of Climate Action Task Force

*By Sophie Braccini*

On a four-to-one vote, the Moraga Town Council approved the creation of a Climate Action Task Force chartered with drafting a Climate Action Plan, or greenhouse gas reduction strategy, for the Town of Moraga. The Task Force will be selected and appointed by Town staff, and will not include members of the Council.

A Climate Action Plan (CAP), according to the staff report, "outlines transportation, water, agriculture, and waste GHG (greenhouse gas) reduction measures to achieve the reduction target, and proposes a timeline for implementation." Having a CAP in place would eliminate the need for new businesses and development projects to undergo additional environmental reviews mandated by the Bay Area Air Quality District's new 2010 CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) regulations that were established following the passage of AB32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, which set the State's 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal into law.

The Council agreed that a establishing a CAP would be in Moraga's best interest and would bring the Town into compliance with the goals of AB32. No one expects Moraga's impact on global warming to be of major significance, but a CAP will streamline residential and business application processes. The five-member Council also agreed that the members of the Climate Action Task Force (CATF) should be appointed by staff.

What the Council did not agree on, however, was whether or not two of its own should sit on the CATF. The final vote was obtained only after a spirited debate.

"I will hold my nose and cross my fingers and vote for it (a CATF with no Council representation)," said Council Member Dave Trotter. He added that he was disappointed that he could not get a majority of three votes to support the direct participation of Council members on the CATF.

Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf voted against the constitution of a CATF sans Council members without any qualms, "We are about to make a very foolish decision, we are abdicating our responsibility," rapped out the Vice Mayor.

Metcalf and Trotter both argued that there is risk that a Task Force without Council participation would become unruly and drive the Town in a direction it would rather avoid. They both wanted Council members to be able to monitor a process that they feared could become a stage for the promotion of a political agenda. "For some people in this Town, (the topic) is a religion," said Metcalf.

Metcalf's passionate argument persuaded Council Member Howard Harpham to qualify his initial position of supporting the non-participation of Council Members in the CATF. Harpham asked the Town Manager not to hesitate to come back to Council to change the CATF's charter to include Council members if debates became too difficult to manage.

Mayor Karen Mendonca and Council Member Ken Chew both stated that they trusted Town Manager Jill Keimach to appoint a group of residents based on their representativeness and competence, and that quarterly progress reports by the CATF to the Council were enough for them.

The staff report indicates, "The Task Force members would be selected to represent a broad range of interests that would not reflect special interests." Keimach expects to have a list of names by January. The CATF will meet monthly for about a year, developing goals and drafting a CAP that would identify ways in which the Town can reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In the end, any Climate Action Plan for Moraga would have to be voted on and approved by the Town Council.

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