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Moraga will use WW Funds for Hacienda and Commons

By Sophie Braccini

Most of Moraga's Measure WW funds for recreation were spent on the renovation of the field at Camino Pablo Elementary School. The Town has until 2018 to spend the remainder of its allocation, but to get some of the \$140,000 left during this budget cycle it must submit an application by March 31, 2012.

Many needs are competing for that money, even after the Town removed Rancho Laguna Park from the picture after an Orinda resident filed a law suit against the Town. At its February 8 meeting, the Council decided to allocate \$30,000 for improvements to the bandshell at the Moraga Commons Park—an addition to the already approved \$15,000 for ADA pathway improvements—and \$42,000 for upgrades to the Hacienda de las Flores and Pavilion restrooms.

A couple of council members recused themselves from the parts of the discussion because of personal ties they have with the local foundations

that will use these funds.

First, Vice Mayor Howard Harpham recused himself because his wife Louise is treasurer of the Parks Foundation that raises money for the parks and operates the Common's Band Shell during major Town events.

Then Mayor Metcalf recused himself for the second part of the discussion because his wife Sharon is a member of the Hacienda Foundation and, as an architect, the likely project manager of the proposed renovations.

Council Member Dave Trotter asked the Town Attorney to check if there was real conflict here, "These are projects to improve property that are owned by the Town, and I don't see how Sharon or Louise would benefit from this," said Trotter, "I'd like to hear guidance (about) whether recusal is really necessary."

"My experience with Town government is that it is better to exercise caution," said Metcalf.

Moraga Police Release Crime Statistics for 2011

By Sophie Braccini

The good news in the recent figures published by the Moraga Police Department is that the number of crimes in 2011 was at a ten-year low of 196; down from 252 in 2010.

The major areas of improvement are robberies, down 67 percent (from three in 2010 to one in 2011), assault, down by 37 percent, and larceny, down by 29 percent.

The number of forcible rapes was up by 500% (from zero in 2010 to five in 2011), and auto thefts rose by 70% (from 10 to 17).

Traffic citation increased, from 1290 in 2010, to 2011 in 2011; mostly

in the area of speed and cell phone use, while adult DUIs decreased from 43 to 27.

"While reviewing the statistics with staff, we discussed possible reasons for the 40 percent drop in DUI arrests," commented Chief Bob Priebe. "While we cannot determine one single cause, it was noted by both supervisors that worked the night shifts during both years, that they had seen a tremendous increase in the use of taxis, which I think could represent some level of success in both education and enforcement efforts."

Take a Gamble on Rancho Laguna Park?

Casino Night event to raise funds for playstructure

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga Parks and Recreation staffer Kim Burrowes may not look like a seasoned poker player as she sits in the office at the Hacienda de las Flores, but she loves the game—as long as it is played for a good cause. On March 3rd, the Hacienda de las Flores will become a gambling house with Blackjack, Craps, Poker and Roulette, all to help raise money for a new play structure at Rancho Laguna Park.

"It's a good idea to give something to people to entice them to give," says Burrowes, "I've been to many of these types of game-fundraisers. It's a lot of fun, it gets the community together and we will raise money for local children's play structure."

"It is also a perfect venue for people who want to learn the games," she says. The event will be managed by Aces Up Casino Parties, a company that will bring all the tables and equipment, as well as the trained personal. "The night will be casino-style and professionally handled," adds Burrowes, "and Aces Up dealers are trained to explain the rules to beginners if needed."

Burrowes is also thinking about adding a Bingo area. "All the tables will be standing-only," she says, "so Bingo would allow people to rest for a while and still have fun."

"Your \$40 ticket buys you a drink, access to the buffet, and \$50 in

play-money (casino chips)," explains Burrowes. At the end of the night, players won't convert their chips back into money—that's the fundraising part—but the more chips you collect, the more opportunities you'll have to win the raffle prizes that are donated by Lamorinda businesses. "And if people run out of chips during the night, they can buy more," adds Burrowes.

The Moraga Movers, a local non-profit organization for active adults over age 55, enthusiastically agreed to sponsor the event. "When I was very active with the Moraga Service League (a group that does not exist anymore), we used to hold a similar fundraiser at Saint Mary's," remembers Julie Fisher, now a member of the Moraga Movers, "This was in the mid 70's and we raised money for the parks and the paramedics and it was a lot of fun." Fisher hopes that parents of kids who will use the playground will be able to attend the event.

The number of participants is limited to 150. Buy your tickets online at moraga.ca.us, or contact Kim Burrowes at 888-7036. Tickets are \$40 until 2/29, then \$50; players have to be 21 or older. Casino Night takes place on Saturday, March 3, 2012 at the Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Drive, Moraga, from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

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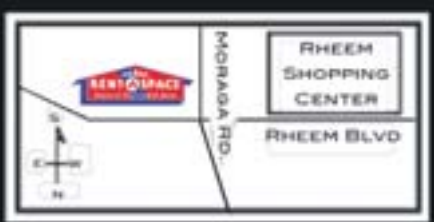
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