



Moraga Civic News

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, March 28, 7:00pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Tuesday, March 19, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Design Review

Monday, March 26, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

School Board Meeting

Moraga School District

Tuesday, April 10, 7:30 pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us
Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



Police Report

Counterfeit money order, 3/07/12 Staff at Mycra Pac Design Wear in the Rheem Shopping Center reported a customer paid for merchandise with a \$500 money order back in February. Recently the staff was informed by their bank that the money order was counterfeit. Cops are investigating the incident, but my guess is a fabulous raincoat or two are long gone.

SMC Burglary, 3/06/12 An acquaintance of a St. Mary's College student may have taken his room key while his pal was in the shower. Later, reporting person noticed that his laptop was missing from his locked dorm room. The alleged suspect 'fessed up to taking the key and the laptop and was taken to Martinez Detention Facility for booking. The fellow may have been smart enough to get into college, but that was just plain stupid.

Bike stolen, 3/05/12 An Ascot Drive townhouse owner had a \$400 mountain bike secured with a combination lock in a rarely used storage shed in the complex. Although she hadn't been to check on it since January, when she recently visited, the lock was gone and so was the bike.

Dude, where's my car? 3/03/12 Cops responded to a report of an auto theft at St. Mary's College. Making a wise decision, the driver of the car got a ride home with friends because he had too much to drink. Car owner returned to pick up his vehicle and it wasn't where he remembered parking it, but added that he had three beers. After officers had left the scene, the reporting person found the car not in the baseball lot where he had left it—but in a lot near the rugby field. Turns out one of his friends snagged the keys and moved the car as a joke. The reporting person stated that he may have moved the car himself without remembering.

Pot at school, 3/2/12 An Associate Principal reported that four Campolindo students were collectively in possession of marijuana, a grinder and a bong. The pot and paraphernalia were destroyed at the school and the incident was handled in-house with a five day suspension. Students' parents were notified.

Short term runaway, 2/29/12 Cops were dispatched to Rheem Elementary School for a report of a 16-year-old runaway and met with his mother. She said her son walked away after they had argued. Police located the youth near the school and he agreed to go home with his mom without further incident.

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Since our first issue...

- Moraga launched an annual Community Faire that takes place every May
- The Moraga Center Specific Plan, approved after 7 years of work
- Palo Colorados development approved, after 20 years of debate
- The Hacienda de las Flores grew as a community hub with celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo and Oktoberfest
- Voters said No on Both to open space Measures J and K
- Town says YES to speed bumps on Camino Pablo, but residents say NO
- There have been four Town Managers, two Planning Directors and three Administrative Services Directors; Mike Metcalf and Dave Trotter remain on the Town Council
- The Town-Gown partnership is stronger than ever
- Year 'round Farmers' Market!
- Moraga is home to three bonded wineries and countless winegrowers; annual Pear Festival becomes the Pear and Wine Festival
- Moraga landed on the list of the 10 best places to live and learn in the US

Bruce Whitley, Planning Commissioner Extraordinaire, Steps Down

By Sophie Braccini



Bruce Whitley Photo Sohie Braccini

Extraordinaire: out of the ordinary; a good adjective for Bruce Whitley, a Moraga Planning Commissioner who served for 8 years—the maximum term of 6 years plus two additional years by decision of the Town Council. The reason for the exception is that by all accounts, Whitley brought to the Commission a dispassionate and analytical view point that was very helpful in the decision-making process. His motivation for serving so long as a volunteer on a body that requires quite a bit of work was his desire to be part of and involved in the community he's lived in for 14 years. He attended his last Planning Commission meeting as a Commissioner on February 22.

"Most people have the desire to be involved in the community. Different people do it in different ways; some give time to the PTA, others to sports groups," says Whitley, "I have a particular skill set, I am a CPA and an attorney, I work with papers and documents; so I looked for something that would use that skill set and be involved with the community—I thought that

the Planning Commission would be a good way to go."

The Planning Commission is a body of seven residents, appointed by the Town Council, who meet twice a month to review, evaluate and decide matters prepared by the Planning Director. Their decisions can be appealed to the Town Council. Over the past eight years, Whitley's been involved into all the important planning decisions in town, such as the final approval of the Palos Colorados Development, the Rancho Laguna Development, the Moraga Center Specific Plan, the Hetfield development, and, on the business side, Orchard Supply and Dollar Tree, to name a few.

Whitley believes, however, that making a difference means more than deciding the big ticket issues. "Making a real difference has to do with the decisions that affect individual property and that have a great meaning to people on a personal basis," he says, "the town has restriction on variances; quite often, at least once a month, a homeowner asks for a variance. People want to expand a kitchen or design a house that slightly breaches the strict guidelines of our code. Should the variance be allowed, should it not be allowed, how could we change the project to both honor the desire of the town to restrict certain types of development and assist homeowners to achieve their dreams? That's quite dramatic; it has extreme impact on people's lives. It does make a difference nobody hears about."

In both small and large projects emotions can run high and that's when Whitley's way of addressing issues from a logical perspective based on an analysis of the Town's code was most valued.

"I was on the Planning Commission when he came on eight years ago," says Moraga Mayor Mike Metcalf, "Bruce quickly became a priceless Commissioner. He thinks very clearly, never rushes to talk just for the sake of it, and he

is very thoughtful." Metcalf explains that it was because Whitley was such an anchor for the Commission that he was asked to serve a 4th term.

Lori Salamack, who was Moraga's Planning Director during most of Whitley's tenure, was quickly on the phone from the East Coast to talk about him, because she says there are never enough good things said about him. "You could always count on Bruce (Whitley) to come prepared to the meeting and have done a thorough analysis of the documents," said Salamack from her FEMA office where she is contributing to the Hurricane Irene recovery effort after Hurricane Irene, "yet, he would not come with foregone conclusions. He would always wait for public comment before making up his mind." She added that he was a tremendous public servant and that if the Council decided to prolong his tenure on the Commission it was because his expertise was absolutely essential.

During the February 22 meeting of the Planning Commission, Whitley was part of the discussion brought forth by Shawna Brekke-Read, the new Planning Director, regarding amending the way businesses can get permits. At first, Whitley did not think it was a good idea to change a process where people can say no when they don't like a business, "my ears are still ringing from the discussions about Orchard Supply and Dollar Tree," he said. But as the discussion proceeded his point of view evolved, "The Chamber has correctly pointed out that opening a business in town is difficult and it is a legitimate complaint," he said, "the solution could be allowing certain types of businesses that the people have said they wanted to see in town to get a permit 'over-the-counter', while others would still need findings."

The Council and the Planning Commission will discuss the details of these new rules. It's likely that Whitley, no longer in his Commission seat, will still be paying attention.

Tonight: Off-Leash Dogs Return to the Council

By Sophie Braccini

Tonight, March 14, the Moraga Town Council will once again consider the fate of off-leash dogs at Rancho Laguna Park. The Council's November 2011 decision to fence in the dogs is expected to be rescinded in order to avoid a legal confrontation by residents who believe the plan was adopted without the required environmental analysis.

In its place, Town staff has proposed four options:

The first would authorize off-leash dogs at Rancho Laguna Park in the early hours of the morning only.

Option two would authorize off-leash dogs at Rancho Laguna Park in the late hours of the

afternoon only.

The third option is to develop, somewhere in Moraga, a dedicated fenced dog park not to exceed 1.5 acres. Off-leash hours would no longer be in effect outside of a fenced area.

Option four would cancel all off-leash hours.

The rationale for the first two options was not explained in the staff report. Option three was recommended by staff, while option four was designated to have the least fiscal impact.

Option 3 does not come with a proposed location or a drawing, but Rancho Laguna Park is cited as a possible location for a future fenced dog park. If that option is approved, the issue goes back to square one and off-leash hours will

be terminated at Rancho Laguna Park in the mean time.

In the staff report, the timeline of the Rancho Laguna Park saga is spelled out. It started in November of 2008, when a County employee issued a citation to a dog owner for allowing his animal to run off leash. Three years later, the problem that started as a simple matter of rule clarification remains unresolved. It's unlikely that March 14 will see the end of confrontation between dog owners, who want the park to just stay the way it is with the rules that they say have worked for more than 20 years, and the Town that wants to create a physical separation between off-leash dogs and other park users.

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