



# Moraga Civic News

## Public Meetings

### Town Council

Wednesday, April 25, 7:00pm  
 Wednesday, May 9, 7:00pm  
 Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,  
 1010 Camino Pablo

### Planning Commission

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

### Design Review

Monday, May 14, 7:00 pm  
 Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

### School Board Meeting

**Moraga School District**  
 Tuesday, May 8, 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

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- 2 bedroom,
  - 1.5 bath
  - 1474 sq. ft. -
  - Freshly updated
  - Private lot
- Offered at \$439,000**

### Open Sunday 1-4



352 Deerfield Dr., Moraga  
 6 bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths,  
 3 car garage - over 3400 sq ft  
**Offered at \$1,215,000**

### Sale Pending



440 Deerfield Dr., Moraga  
 5 bedrooms, 2.5 bath 2969 sq ft.  
**Offered at \$1,199,000**



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# Moraga Town Council's Cohesiveness Shaken

## Town staff charged with finding out what works in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini

For over 25 years the titles Mayor and Vice Mayor rotated among elected members of the Moraga Town Council according to who won the highest number of votes in the general election, and one year's vice mayor usually became the next year's mayor. Since there are five council members each serving four-year terms, and the mayor and vice mayor seats are held for one year, there was always one council member who never got a turn—according to tradition, the loser of this game of musical chairs was always the one who residents sent to the council on the fewest votes.

Occasionally this tradition has

been challenged. For example, a few years ago now-mayor Mike Metcalf attempted to pull the chairs out from under both Lynda Deschambault and Ken Chew. He did not succeed because the rest of that particular Council was determined not to break the unwritten rule.

But tradition was cast aside last December when Karen Mendonca proposed that Howard Harpham become vice mayor—despite an expectation that the seat would go to Dave Trotter, who got more votes than Harpham—and no one opposed. In another twist, Harpham's term in office ends this December, although he said during a recent interview that he plans to run for a second term.

This dramatic end to a system that had been perfectly predictable for so many years took some Moraga residents by surprise and, during a public comment period, Ellen Beans called for the issue to be put on the Town Council's agenda for discussion.

On April 11 the Council considered the question of how Moraga's mayor and vice mayor should be chosen.

Mendonca, Metcalf and Chew agreed that because the current tradition was not set in writing there was no reason to be bound by it, and having flexibility in the choice of who would lead was more important. "If the Council thinks that a particular leader would be best at the time, that's

when the Council would want to maximize its flexibility," said Mendonca, recalling a conversation she had with a former Town Manager who explained the rules to her.

Trotter preferred a system that he said has kept politics, lobbying, and personal disputes out of the process, and that has served the town well; but he received no support from his colleagues.

With the Council's agreement, Metcalf concluded the discussion by asking staff to look into the City of Lafayette's process, by which the mayor's seat rotates among all Council members regardless of the number of popular votes received, and bring a proposal back to the Council at an unspecified future date since other, more pressing, issues are presently on the Council's plate.

### What will Moraga's staff find in Lafayette?

Like Moraga, Lafayette does not have a formal written procedure for selecting its mayor and vice mayor. According to the Lafayette City Council members themselves, it's a loosely-defined process that works well because the members are respectful, listen more than they talk, and even if they sometimes disagree with one another, they never carry a grudge.

"We used to rotate the mayor's seat the same way Moraga did," explained Lafayette City Council Mem-

ber Don Tatzin who, with 27 years of service, is the Council veteran. "We always knew what the policy was and followed it. We never took anyone out of order or skipped anybody. My experience has been that everybody always does the best they can when it is their year to be the mayor."

But Tatzin felt it was a bit unfair that this system could prevent the lowest vote-getter from ever becoming mayor and, when Brandt Andersson was elected to the Council, Tatzin supported Andersson's proposal under which everyone gets a turn – and the Council agreed.

"We still do not have anything in writing," said Andersson, who has now been on the Council for seven years. "I discussed it with the city manager and the mayor at the time, and we decided on a system that's a combination of who's been on the Council the longest and not had a turn the longest. That person gets to be the next in line."

What makes this system work in Lafayette is that council members all agree on the concept. "We have an understanding that this is a collegial decision," added Andersson. "We've had many years of very successful city government and we continue to serve because everybody works together to make life better here. There are not a lot of conflicts, otherwise we would want to get out of it," he concluded.



## Police Report

Driver in Pond, 4/10/12 At Moraga Country Club – that usually refers to a golf club. However a 32-year-old female driver of a rented red 2010 Mazda was, not surprisingly, under the influence when she drove down Country Club Drive and kept going after the street ends and landed in the pond. She was able to swim from the completely submerged vehicle to safety, then ended up walking to Safeway where she called police to report the incident. Looks like she made it through a pile of wood chips and into the pond on the ninth hole with only a slight injury to her wrist. Value of lost pride and DUI charges hard to know at this point.



Superhero tow truck driver prepares to take a dip in the pond at the ninth hole of the Moraga Country Club to rescue car. Because rowing the car ashore won't work, driver stands on the roof of the submerged rental Mazda before diving in to hook up tow cable. Photo Pete Heckler

Stolen car found, 4/04/12 An anonymous caller reported an abandoned car parked on Rimer Drive. Cops investigated and after checking DMV records, found the car was stolen from Easy Rent a Car in San Leandro. The car was towed by Lamorinda Tow Company, since the registered owner was unable to be located at the time of the incident. Only twenty miles more or less from San Leandro to Mo-town – but a world apart.

Pot at Campo, 4/14/12 On routine patrol of Campolindo High School at roughly 11:00 p.m., cops observed a parked car in the rear lot with two people in it. Is that eau de marijuana emanating from the car? Why yes, turns out in addition to smoke, two plastic baggies of pot and several unspecified drug paraphernalia items were found. Parents of the pair were contacted and the kids were released to their custody.

False alarm, 4/14/12 Although there were no signs of forced entry or suspicious activity, an audible alarm was sounding from a Camino Peral home. Cops checked the perimeter, and didn't find anything unusual.

Drunk college kid, 4/13/12 It was barely happy hour when Moraga Police were dispatched to St. Mary's College to assist Moraga-Orinda Fire District personnel with a 21-year-old intoxicated female. She was awake and responsive enough to say thanks, but no thanks to an offer of a ride to the hospital for medical evaluation.

Under the influence, 4/08/12 Usually residents are tucked in and fast asleep at 1:20 in the morning, but police were called to check on an unknown female knocking on a Camino Ricardo door. The woman in question didn't know where she was or how she got there. Although she was rambling, she 'fessed up that she had taken LSD two hours earlier.

## Cinco en Seis

### Moraga's Cinco de Mayo celebration to take place on May 6

By Sophie Braccini



Mariachi music at last years festival

Photo Andy Schreck

Moraga's Hacienda Foundation invites the community to come and enjoy the beautiful Hacienda de las Flores and its grounds for a family celebration of Cinco de Mayo—loosely based on the celebration of the Mexican military victory of *la Batalla de Puebla*, around here the 5th of May brings a celebration of California's Hispanic heritage.

This year, in addition to the various food and live entertainment that residents have learned to expect at this event, a piece of local history will be presented by the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe (FJMA). Actually located just across the border in Orinda, the Adobe is the original home of Joaquin Moraga, to whom

much of the land that comprises Lamorinda was granted by the Mexican government in the 1800s. The presentation about the historic structure, which is now at the center of a development battle and was recently struck by vandals, will emphasize its historical significance.

"FJMA will participate in the 'Cinco de Mayo Fiesta' to build community awareness of the Moraga Adobe," said FJMA president Kent Long. "We will have an information booth dedicated to the Adobe plus various fun, kid-oriented activities." FJMA has secured the presence of the National Park Service, who will come with informational displays about the de Anza exhibition and reproductions

of historic Presidio uniforms that kids can dress-up in.

The Adobe was built by Moraga in 1841, out of clay, water and straw bricks, on the land known as Rancho Laguna de los Palos Colorados. The land grant included parts of Orinda and Lafayette and the communities of Canyon, Redwood, Rheem, and Moraga.

The subject of much public debate, the Adobe today is located on a 20-acre private property in Orinda, close to the Moraga border, that successive owners have tried to develop. The current owner is working with the Orinda Planning Department on a 13-home project that would renovate the Adobe for use as a homeowner club house. ... continued on page A8

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