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Moraga Challenges Grand Jury Report Town is free of CalPERS debt

By Sophie Braccini

The Contra Costa County Grand Jury recently released a report titled, "City Retirement Plans, An Unsustainable Benefit?" with recommendations for local municipalities. This report did not go over well with the Town Council and staff, who were concerned that the Grand Jury made mistakes regarding Moraga's finances and disappointed that it did not take the opportunity to highlight the lean compensation plans that allow Moraga to be CalPERS (California Public Employees' Retirement System) debt-free to date, a rare achievement.

Town staff prepared a response to the report that was presented to the Town Council by Administrative Services Director Stephanie Hom. "Staff believes that the Grand Jury made a couple of inaccurate and misleading statements," said Hom in her usual measured tone.

In September 2011 the Town of Moraga, like other communities in the county, completed a City Pension Survey sent by the Grand Jury.

"The Grand Jury went with a pre-conceived idea," said a very upset Chief of Police Bob Priebe. "They missed a golden opportunity to use the Town of Moraga to show how to do things right, and they need to be corrected."

In its response to the Grand Jury report, staff explains how Moraga compensates its employees, including police, and compares the Town with other local municipalities. Moraga has consistently reduced employee benefits and pensions and used developer fees to pay CalPERS all of its unfunded pension liabilities in 2007.

"Unfunded pension liabilities nationwide amount to $2 trillion," said Vice Mayor Howard Harpham. "I'm so pleased that Moraga has no unfunded pension allocation."

The Town's response is available on its web site-interested readers can find it under the Town News tab at moraga. ca.us.

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