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## Moraga's New Mayor Wants to Leave His Mark

By Sophie Braccini



Mayor Dave Trotter presents his goals for 2013.  
Photo Andy Scheck

There was no doubt in Dave Trotter's mind that he would be mayor of Moraga in 2013. It was not clear a year ago when Howard Harpham was elected vice mayor, breaking the Moraga tradition of rotating the top spot according to the number of votes received in the general election. But Harpham didn't run for re-election and Trotter believed that no one would stand in the way of tradition again in December. Following the election he worked with town staff to fine tune a list of seven objectives that define his vision for the town in 2013. The Town Council will debate and approve these goals, probably in mid-January during its traditional goal-setting session.

Trotter was elected to the council in 2006 and 2010 on a conservative and pro-open-space platform. His voting record is consistent; every time a development was proposed on a MOSO property he advocated for minimal impact. This year, the General Plan is up for a partial review and Trotter wants to leave his mark in the tightening of the rules for development on slopes and ridgelines. "The result of Rancho Laguna 2 shows that the General Plan's wording is not strong enough to protect our open space and we need to give it more teeth," said Trotter. That development was approved by the council in 2011 and includes a home to be

built on a minor ridgeline. It passed on a 2-1 vote, with Trotter opposed. "It is time to put this issue on the table, and it will require the vote of a majority of the council to pass," he added.

Trotter wants to go a step further and is proposing a moratorium on development until the General Plan is modified. "This is very typically done in a situation where you're undergoing a review of your General Plan; it is part of the toolbox," said Trotter. He added that the town did something similar when it regulated the activity of medicinal marijuana.

Another of Trotter's objectives that will have an impact on how Moraga is transformed in the years to come is to encourage small wineries while protecting neighbors from impacts. "We already have two small scale wineries in Moraga," said Trotter, referring to Parkmon Vineyards and Captain Vineyards where two Moraga families harvest grapes, and produce and sell their own wines. Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read is working on ways to regulate this activity in residential neighborhoods, and it is likely that defining what "small" is will be a central element. "We have to consider the setting and its impact on neighbors," said Trotter. "The first thing is to work on a zoning regulation."

Trotter does not know what this regulation should be, but has ideas on how to limit the impacts of winemaking. "It would be great to have a co-op processing facility in the Moraga Center, as has been proposed by others," said the new mayor.

Two other issues related to land use have been added to Trotter's list, addressing town-owned land use. He would like to start negotiations with Moraga Country Club regarding the rent of a large piece of property commonly referred to as the "Back Nine." The club currently rents it from the town at low cost, but these inexpensive terms will terminate at the end of 2013. Trotter would also like the council to look into annexing the land located north of Rancho Laguna Park that was developed without the town being able to weigh in because, although it's within the town's "sphere of influence," it's not actually part of the town.

Trotter's list does not include new objectives related to the Moraga Center Specific Plan. He believes the plan that proposes for 700 housing units in downtown Moraga is adequate, and its implementation is beyond the control of the town since the area is privately owned. "The Specific Plan included language that indicated that the town wanted to discuss development agreements with the property owners," said Trotter. "We have received no indication that the property owners have any interest in doing so." The risk is that projects will get developed separately with little of the public benefits that were included in the plan, such as the creation of a real downtown around School Street, the connection of trails along the creek, or the renovation of the Moraga Shopping Center. "The lack of progress is frustrating," acknowledged Trotter. "It's when you have a development agreement that you can plan in a comprehensive way, rather than when it happens piecemeal. Then what you have to guide you is the text of the Specific Plan."

Trotter's other objectives are in line with what was achieved in previous years—a balanced budget; the implementation of a road repair plan after the passage of Measure K; continuation of improvements to the Hacienda de las Flores as it serves as a community center; and cooperation with the school district to improve recreational facilities in town.

Also not on Trotter's list: off-leash dogs at Rancho Laguna Park, an issue he would happily let rest for 2013, if it's just up to him.

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