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Council Plans for Measure K Oversight

By Sophie Braccini

As required under the ballot measure, the Moraga Town Council recently defined the attributes of the new Measure K Citizens' Oversight Committee that will make sure that the money the town receives from its newly passed sales tax will go toward road repairs for the next 20 years.

The committee will start its work in April when the 1 percent Moraga sales tax takes effect. The Council agreed that it should be a seven-member body with a quorum of four. The committee will meet two to four times per year, the frequency being determined by either the committee itself or by the town council.

This group will review a yearly report provided by the Administrative Services Director presenting the status and performance of the programs and services funded wholly or partially with proceeds from the tax. It will also have access to the audited financial statements for all of the town's financial activities where the auditor will include an accounting of the revenue received from the tax and the matching expenditures. In turn, the oversight committee will present a report to the council once a year.

The oversight committee is not to conduct outreach about their work or recommend any specific road repairs; its responsibility is just to make sure that the sales tax goes to the roads. But, as Town Manager Jill Keimach pointed out, there are some gray areas. "Would a parking lot like the one we are constructing by the skatepark be a good Measure K project? How about storm drain and sidewalk repairs? Could ADA improvements or staff time be part of it?" she asked.

Council members did not want to leave these decision to the new committee and told the town manager that projects would be reviewed by the council and this type of political decision would be taken at the political level-by the council itself.

Resident Seth Freeman came to the council to make some suggestions as to the modus operandi of the committee and also to express an interest in being nominated. Keimach said that she had already received numerous inquiries from residents interested in overseeing the tax money usage.

The council decided to interview all of the potential committee members at a public meeting in February. The qualifications they deemed necessary included finance and accounting, pavement management, public sector capital project management, public affairs and communications. They decided that no council member will hold a seat on the oversight committee, although a member of the Audit and Finance Committee will join the group as a liaison without voting rights.

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