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Mr. Chew Will Not Go To Washington

By Sophie Braccini

The National League of Cities serves as an advocate and resource for its member municipalities across the country. Vice Mayor Ken Chew recently asked the Moraga Town Council to consider joining NLC and allow him to attend its Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C. in March. The proposal met with little support from his colleagues. "There are many benefits for a city to become a member," explained Chew as he distributed a comprehensive list to the council. "Let me highlight one of them, the Prescription Discount Card Program." This NLC service for member cities gives rebates of an average of 23 percent on prescription medications for residents who are without health insurance, a traditional pharmacy benefit plan, or have prescriptions not covered by insurance. The national program includes CVS pharmacies, so Moraga residents could benefit from it.

Chew also emphasized the importance of exchanging ideas with other jurisdictions.

Staff indicated the cost of sending a council member to the conference would be \$2,500-\$3,000; joining NLC would cost \$1,489. The council directed staff to study the benefits of NLC membership and report back.

Council Member Mike Metcalf was the first to oppose spending on out-of-state travel. "We just passed Measure K and have promised that the additional money we receive will go to the roads," he said. "It is not the time to behave like drunken sailors." Metcalf reluctantly agreed to have staff research the benefits of joining NLC although he felt that the organization is not a good fit for communities such as Moraga.

Council Member Wykle said he understood the benefits of widening one's point of view by participating in such conferences, but suggested this may not be the right time. Council Member Phil Arth concurred with Wykle, adding his belief that in a town like Moraga very few people are without health insurance so there would be little need for the benefit of the prescription discount card.

Mayor Dave Trotter retraced the history of council members traveling out of state. "We cut that out of the budget in 2008 and redirected the money to support the Spirit Van," he noted in opposing the trip.

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