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## Temporary Signs Flourish Along Scenic Corridor Town tries to restore order

By Sophie Braccini



This large sign at a gas station is not allowed.  
Photos Sophie Braccini

They are hard to miss - those tall, flapping signs that two gas stations have erected along Moraga Road. They aren't actually allowed to be there, yet they remain.

Moraga does not have a temporary sign ordinance, so anyone who wants to display a temporary sign or banner must request approval from the town and the signs can only be up for a limited time. Approval is not always granted, but the consequences of not seeking approval are a little fuzzy. At the June 12 meeting of the Moraga Town Council, the owners of the new Cafe Hacienda Home/Made asked permission for small A-frame signs to direct the public to the cafe's location at the Hacienda de las Flores that is not easily found if you don't know where to look. They had to defend their request against the challenge of commercial real estate broker Dave Schnayer who claimed that the signs would give that business unequal treatment.

"The Town is creating further exceptions, favoritism and discriminating against those businesses and business people who have been operating in our Town for years," wrote Schnayer to the town manager. As he indicated in his letter, there have been numerous discussions in town regarding such signage but no rules have been approved

and businesses that use A-frame signs to promote themselves receive violation notices from town staff.

Town Manager Jill Keimach said that the proposed signs were an exception to the rule, as informational signs direct people to where the business is located.

Council members considered the letter and heard the plea of Gayle Somers, one of the cafe's owners, who explained they had no other way to indicate where they are located.

Councilmember Roger Wykle argued that allowing the signs would create a disparity in the way businesses are treated, but after a short discussion the signs were approved on a 3 to 1 vote.

As for those gas station signs, Planning Department assistant Kelley Clancy confirmed that notices of violation requiring the removal of the signs had been sent to the gas stations and to Schnayer, who displays two signs along Moraga Road that are larger and more numerous than what the town allows. She was not sure what the next step would be if they do not comply.



The cafe's A-frame sign received approval.



This vacant business sign along Moraga Road is non-compliant.

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