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Fields of the Future

School district and town plan to work together

By Sophie Braccini

Although the setting was formal and distant, there was no chill in the air at a joint meeting of the Moraga School District and the Town Council on Oct. 22. After listening to a presentation on the district's financial future, the Town Council proposed to revive the joint committee whose work led to the town providing funding for the renovation of the sports field at Camino Pablo Elementary School. The school district agreed to start looking into planning the renovation of the middle school's fields, and proposed to extend the dialogue on sharing sports resources to the high school and college. The joint committee will be comprised of two council members and two school district board members, and will start its work early in 2014.

Concerned about the welfare of the school district, Councilmember Michael Metcalf asked the school board what kind of impact that future developments, which are now on the drawing board in Moraga, would have on their finances. Jill Keimach, the town manager, listed those projects but noted that forecasting an exact time when they would translate into actual population growth is a crystal ball exercise. The first development, that could be on the market in the next couple of years, is the 26-home Summerhill project on Camino Ricardo; the others are probably four to 15 years in the future.

Superintendent Bruce Burns replied to Metcalf's question by saying that the answer is not clear cut - new students translate into additional revenue, but the state does not fund students at the actual cost of their education.

Mayor David Trotter broached the revival of the sports fields subcommittee to plan for additional cooperation between the town and school district to improve the quality of the fields and access by sports groups.

The logical place to start, according to the mayor, is at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, which has multiple sports fields in need of amendment.

School district board member Shari Simon proposed to include in the discussion all of the institutions that could share sports fields, such as Saint Mary's College and Campolindo High School; the Town Council supported the idea of widening the conversation.

Simon volunteered to serve on the joint committee and disclosed her position on the board of the East Bay Eclipse Soccer Club, as did board member Charles McNulty. As the Town Council representatives, Trotter nominated himself and Metcalf. Keimach will develop a charter with parks and recreation director Jay Ingram and invite Campolindo and Saint Mary's College to join the discussion.

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