



Moraga Civic News

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, May 28, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, June 11, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Monday, June 2, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Design Review

Tuesday, May 27, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us
Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

School Board Meeting

Moraga School District

Tuesday, June 10, 7:30 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us
See also AUHSD meeting page A2



Moraga Police Department

Tennis shouting match, 5/10/14 Cops responded to St. Andrews Drive to check on a report of a verbal disturbance at the tennis courts. Two tennis players stated a subject had made threats and cursed at them. Officers contacted the subject who stated he confronted the other players due to statements they made to him a few months prior. The subject left without further incident.

Hit and run, 5/10/14 A car parked on Hansen Court was hit by an unknown suspect which caused moderate damage to a Subaru Impreza's door. No note, just a dent.

Youth and booze, 5/10/14 Officers went to Augusta Drive to look into an anonymous report of an underage party in the middle of the afternoon. About eight to 10 teenage males were sitting around a table in the backyard. When officers attempted to contact the resident, all but one of the young men fled over the rear fence. The kid left behind and the juvenile resident had not been drinking – however the police report details a "copious" amount of beer which was photographed and destroyed. Cops looked for the kids that took off with negative results.

Smashed window, 5/09/14 A car window had been smashed at a Donald Drive residence after midnight. Officers confirmed that yes, indeed, the window had been smashed and tried to contact the registered owner. The registered owner is out of the country, but his family was notified. Damage to window and door frame is estimated at \$500. No suspects or witnesses at this time.

Cranky email, 5/07/14 A Carroll Drive resident went to Moraga police headquarters to report threatening emails from a person he was involved in a car crash with. Police determined the notes were offensive, but not legally threatening. The reporting person asked that the situation be documented in case the emails escalate.

Runaway teen 5/06/13 A female Campolindo student was being counseled in the associate principal's office and suddenly fled, leav-

The Bernie & Ryerson Team



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Councilmember Accuses Moraga Planning Commission of Insubordination

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga Councilmember Mike Metcalf is known for his direct language, but rarely, if ever, has he publicly scolded appointed commissioners for their actions - until the May 14 meeting of the Moraga Town Council, when he announced that the Planning Commission committed "an act of outright insubordination." The design of a pedestrian bridge and a new crosswalk on Moraga Road is the bone of contention that led to the confrontation.

The bridge and crosswalk are part of the pending Summerhill Homes development on Camino Ricardo and will link the Moraga Commons to a new nature area on the opposite side of Moraga Road. The Planning Commission had decided that the cross-

walk should not be set at the level of the skate park, because a majority of planning commissioners believed it was too close to the bend in the road and presented safety issues. But when the Town Council reviewed the development agreement it decided that the bridge should indeed be at the level of the skate park and asked the Planning Commission to change the conditions of approval to align with its decision.

Planning commissioners instead upheld their first decision.

"In our prepared staff report we outlined for the commission what the Town Council had done and had directed the developer to do," explained Shawna Brekke-Read, planning director. "We recommended that the

commission follow the Council's lead and change the conditions of approval," at its April 21 meeting.

The commission voted 4-1-1 to confirm the conditions of approval without the change requested by the Town Council. Chair Christine Kuckuk cast the dissenting vote and commissioner Steve Woehleke abstained.

After the Town Council meeting, planning commissioner Frank Compelli said he was saddened, disappointed and a little disturbed by Metcalf's statement. "To the best of my knowledge, the commission is an independent body," he said. "Our role is to discuss issues and make decisions that can be overruled by the Town Council. We are not sub-

servient to or controlled by the Town Council; it is perfectly okay for it to make a final, and different, decision."

At the end of his statement, Metcalf said that he would be pleased to learn that "those planning commissioners ... have tendered their resignations."

Mayor Ken Chew said later that the entire Town Council agreed with Metcalf. "The Planning Commission is an advisory body that carries out the policy decisions made by the Council," he stated. The Town Council overturned the Planning Commission's decision, which had been appealed by the developer, and confirmed the positioning of the bridge and crosswalk near the skate park.

New Rules for Signs in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

Local business owners and the Moraga Chamber of Commerce have repeatedly voiced concern over the lack of visibility of local businesses. The Moraga Planning Commission recently completed its task of revising the town's sign ordinance – the introduction of a few new concepts should allow businesses in Moraga to spend less time and money installing compliant signs that may make it a bit easier to attract potential customers. The revisions will likely go into effect this summer.

The Town Council will consider the question of how to enforce the new rules as it discusses the enforcement and nuisance abatement code on Wednesday, May 21.

The modifications to the sign ordinance were conceived with a num-

ber of rules supporting business visibility. As a general rule Moraga only allows signs that are indirectly lit by a non-visible light source, but soon a business could have a single, internally-lit window sign as long as it doesn't blink. The code also allows for portable signs to be installed in commercial districts for a year, as long as they are removed at night, not lit, and not more than four feet high.

Other regulations were added with the intent to simplify and clarify the permit process. Many signs will now be approved administratively and will no longer require a lengthy and costly Design Review Board hearing. Such signs include wall signs of less than 50 square feet, portable signs, awning signs, permanent non-lit window signs, and signs

conforming to something new in Moraga: a master sign program.

A master sign program is a set of rules that are common to multi-tenant business areas and approved by the town. New multi-tenant areas must seek approval for their master sign programs; existing multi-tenant shopping areas will not be required to get a sign plan approved unless a space of more than 5,000 square feet is renovated, or a new monument sign is envisioned, or a new conditional use permit is requested.

Commercial property owners who came to the Planning Commission meeting expressed regrets over what they perceive as a tendency by government bodies to over-regulate and create hindrances to a healthy competitive climate. Ella Samonsky, the town's associate planner, believes

otherwise. "A master sign program will give the opportunity to any new or existing tenant to get their sign approved administratively if it is conforming to the group's pre-approved rules," she said. At this time, the only multi-tenant area in town that has a master sign program is the Rheem Shopping Center.

In addition, the 2014-2015 capital improvement plan should include way-finding signs that direct people to shopping areas and the revised sign code includes provisions for way-finding signs inside shopping centers.

Commissioners asked that the rules be reviewed after a year, with special attention paid to portable signs. The Town Council will have two readings of the revised code, in May and June, and it should go into effect in July.

Livable Moraga Road Meets Town Council

Proposed lane reduction rocks the boat

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Planning Department has conducted multiple public workshops over the last few months in order to develop a plan for Moraga Road between Campolindo and Saint Mary's Road, dubbed the Livable Moraga Road project. The gathering of public input led to the definition of a preferred scenario that staff presented to the Town Council on May 14 so council members could offer feedback before a final series of outreach meetings begin.

Shawna Brekke-Read, the town's planning director, summarized the el-

ements incorporated in the preferred scenario: a multi-use path accessible to pedestrians and children on bikes; a continuous sidewalk; bike lanes for serious cyclists; and safe and fluid transit lanes for all car users, including commuters going to schools and beyond. (Read related articles about the Livable Moraga Road project in our archive at www.lamorindaweekly.com.)

One aspect that caught council members' attention was a reduction in the number of lanes between Corliss and Donald drives from four to two, with an added turning lane, to create

enough space for the pedestrian and bike lanes. The Town Council was divided. Mayor Ken Chew praised staff for the quality of the outreach effort and the creativity of the new configuration, while Councilmember Dave Trotter forcefully opposed the idea of only two travel lanes on that stretch of road, arguing that commuters had not been sufficiently involved in the outreach activities and would not favor the change. He also asked staff to check the width of the town's right of way along Moraga Road to see if it could accommodate the scenario's continu-

ous sidewalk and multi-user path.

Jill Keimach, town manager, suggested that the town simulate the proposed configuration with barriers or plants to test the scenario in real life and raise commuters' awareness. "Our consultant did such a simulation in another city recently," said Brekke-Read, "it's a great idea." Keimach noted that a simulation should be done over several weeks to bring significant results; and with school soon out for the summer, it might be better to wait until September when traffic returns to its normal level.

Town of Moraga Upcoming Community Meeting schedule



Housing Element Update

Thursday, May 22, 2014, 7-9 PM, Hacienda de las Flores, La Sala Building
The Town of Moraga is updating its current Housing Element. Attend this workshop to learn more about the update, and provide input on how the Town and community can address housing challenges facing Moraga.



Hillsides and Ridgelines Regulations Update: Workshop #2

Thursday, June 5, 2014 7-9 PM,
Hagerty Lounge at De la Salle Hall,
Saint Mary's College
This second community workshop will be an opportunity to learn about Moraga's current hillside regulations, and help identify and prioritize key areas for improvement. Learn more at www.moraga.ca.us/hillsides