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Published July 16th, 2014

SMC Parking and Traffic Impacts Concern Council

By Sophie Braccini

Barry Behr was not happy May 24. It was commencement day at Saint Mary's College and 758 students - the largest graduating class in the history of the college - received their diplomas. For the Moraga resident who was just trying to get out of town it was a difficult experience, as proud parents parked anywhere they could and sped on foot, counter to traffic, to get to the big event on time.

Behr came to the Moraga Town Council on June 25 to share his frustration. Council members who live near SMC acknowledged that there was a problem due to unmanaged excessive traffic and parking. Although nobody wanted to antagonize the town's college partner, the council recognized that traffic issues are the cost of success for a college that keeps growing and it would like to learn how SMC plans to solve the problem.

Additional parking may be in the college's future, but not for a while. Michael McAlpin, director of media relations, indicated that SMC's master plan will be affected by a five-year strategic plan currently being crafted under the leadership of new president James Donahue. Moraga's planning director, Shawna Brekke-Read, explained that the college's target date for completion of the plan is in flux, but she confirmed that when the document is ready it will have to be approved by the town's planning commission.

Not one to sit idly and wait, police chief Robert Priebe reached out to his SMC counterpart, public safety chief Adan Tejada, and two men started working on ways to control the problem. The chiefs agreed that Moraga police officers will, in the near future, train the campus' safety officers to direct traffic. "Our officers will direct traffic at (the campus') intersection with St. Mary's Road and can go to the Rheem Boulevard/St. Mary's Road intersection," explained Tejada.

In addition, Tejada said that he had provided input for SMC's master plan and that additional parking will be constructed within the college's boundaries. SMC's next big events are the move-in day this fall and a career fair in October, but parking will be accommodated onsite according to Tejada.

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