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Town Accepts the Climate Action Plan

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Town Council accepted a climate action plan on Oct. 22 that was developed, over a year and a half, by a task force comprised of 18 volunteers working with a consultant. Moraga has many years of history developing climate action plans, a set of strategies intended to guide efforts for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In March 2006, the California Environmental Protection Agency released its Climate Action Team Report to Gov. Schwarzenegger and the state legislature. At the state level, the goal adopted is a greenhouse gas reduction of 20 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. Many cities have embraced the concept and are designing their own climate action plans to contribute to the general goal.

ICLEI USA, Local Governments for Sustainability, won a grant in 2008 to define Moraga's carbon footprint (as well as those of Lafayette and Orinda); a first action plan was drafted following the inventory and was accepted by the Town Council - but not adopted. Unlike adopting a plan, accepting a plan does not carry a request for further action.

For this year's iteration, the Town Council again decided that accepting the plan was sufficient. Because the plan was not adopted, it cannot be certified by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which has oversight of local climate action plans, negating one of the reasons to create such a plan - streamlining the CEQA process, on required analysis of greenhouse gas impacts, for developers.

Staff presented to the Town Council the 40 measures that were proposed by the task force to reduce Moraga's carbon dioxide emissions 4 percent by 2020 (read the related article in our archive at www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0816/Moraga-Planning-Commission-Says-Climate-Action-Plan-Needs-More-Work.html).

Councilmember Mike Metcalf said the measures that addressed transportation and construction were by far the most effective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "The most bang for the buck comes from carpool and rideshare programs," he said, "and we are already working on that with CCTA (Contra Costa Transportation Authority)." He proposed to not spend any more money on the plan to get it to a point where it could be submitted for certification by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which has oversight of local climate action plans, but rather to use it simply as a guideline - his motion met with unanimous approval.

After the meeting, Mayor Ken Chew said the council could have done more to implement the climate action plan. "The CAP was started quite a few years ago since I got on the council in 2006," he said. "Unfortunately, I thought last year the CAP task force was set up for failure. Some of the members on the task force were not too thrilled about the town having a CAP in the first place." "Adopting the plan would provide more 'teeth,'" confirmed Ellen Clark, planning director, "but the council's decision doesn't foreclose taking action on the strategies or even necessarily delay their implementation, depending when and how they're integrated into our future work program."

A few days after the meeting, Moraga resident and former council member Lynda Deschambault alerted town staff to a grant opportunity - the California Youth Energy Services Rising Sun program, which hires young adults, ages 15 to 22, and trains them to serve communities across the Bay Area with no-cost Green House Calls. At each Green House Call, interns check the home for efficiency, install energy and water-saving equipment, and provide personalized recommendations for further savings. "(Moraga) is pursuing a grant in partnership with Lafayette to fund a CYES team in Moraga and Lafayette," confirmed Ella Samonsky, associate planner.

Deschambault Honored by Sustainable Contra Costa

Sustainable Contra Costa honored nonprofits, businesses, community groups, educators and individuals on Oct. 15 for their efforts toward sustainability at the sixth annual Contra Costa Leadership in Sustainability and Green Building Awards Gala in Concord. Moraga's Lynda Deschambault won the Leadership in Sustainability award in the Individual category, and the

nonprofit she founded and directs, Contra Costa County Climate Leaders (4CL), was voted the "Seed of Change" winner for this year. Lafayette- based Ecohouse was one of two Green Building Award winners.

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