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Facelift for the Moraga Library

By Sophie Braccini



The new garden in front of the library Photo Sophie Braccini

replacement of the 40-plus-year-old bathroom to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. The projected estimate jumped from the original \$100,000 to \$300,000, so the decision to pick up the cost did not come easily.

Architect Gray Dougherty presented the plan he developed after consulting with different stakeholders. He reminded council members that ADA compliance was a legal requirement and that the existing bathroom is non-compliant. The new design was kept simple and functional, and largely within the existing footprint, with water wise and energy smart appliances, but since walls will have to be moved the cost estimate jumped.

"Staff looked at other funding options to keep the project moving forward," Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram said. Ingram could not get contributions from town service groups and the county library did not show much interest either, adding that there were not a lot of grants out there for library infrastructure. One option would have been to delay the work and wait for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) cycle in 2016.

Resident Dale Walwark urged the council to do what he sees as the right thing. "Why can't we nail that down now since we have to do it to obey the law?" he asked. "This is a basic asset of the town. Since we do not have enough money in the asset replacement fund, we should look into using some of the Palos Colorados money (developer's fund worth \$1.8 million) to do this."

Vice-Mayor Mike Metcalf led the argument on the dais supporting immediate action. "We should have done this a lot time ago, (and) this is the place where we should spend Palos money. It is a one-time expense and is a recreation town asset," he said. Councilmember Dave Trotter preferred to wait for a grant cycle and solicit the Friends for some funding. Council agreed to use the town's asset replacement fund and to tap the Palos fund for additional money, while applying for a grant to replenish that fund if some of it is spent. Construction is anticipated to start in the fall.

Councilmember Teresa Onoda, who said that there was nothing "Moraga" in the design, was put in charge of a local contest to adorn the new amenity with an emblematic mural.

Simply drive along St. Mary's Road and you'll notice new landscaping that will make the Moraga Library even more appealing this spring. Revitalizing the library's large front garden was overdue. A few years back the strip along the road was redone after a fire scorched the juniper, but a large portion of the front garden still needed work.

The library grounds belong to the town of Moraga, while Contra Costa County Library operates the facility. The Friends of the Moraga Library contributes handsomely to operations by funding the Sunday hours and all the activities, but generous donors Mark and Dustie Robeson and Joan Bruzzone financed the new garden. Hundreds of plants and tens of trees create a pleasing atmosphere for the popular venue.

The second improvement planned for the library is located in more private areas. At its Feb. 11 meeting, the Town Council approved the

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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