



Moraga

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, April 8, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, April 22, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Monday, April 20, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Design Review

Monday, April 13, canceled
Monday, April 27, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

School Board Meeting Moraga School District

Tuesday, April 14, 7:30 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

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



Moraga Police Department

Attempted burglary, 3/24/15
Knucklehead would-be burglars attempted to rob a home on Country Club Drive while it was occupied. Homeowners were alerted at 9:45 a.m. with the shattering of a rear sliding glass door. One yell from residents made the suspect and an accomplice flee in a newer red Chevy Camaro. The vehicle was sighted by Orinda PD and was involved in a brief high-speed pursuit, but the suspects evaded capture. Nothing was taken, but the homeowners' glass door was ruined.

Fraudulent use of credit card, 3/24/15
A Miramonte Drive resident found a mysterious charge for \$45.35 at Drugstore.com on her Macy's American Express card in February. The reporting person already closed the account, but presumably wanted to document the theft. The incident is under investigation by the American Express Fraud Department.

Possession of paraphernalia, 3/27/15
Two suspicious suspects, a man and woman, were shopping at Safeway at 7 a.m. and were possibly under the influence of drugs. Cops located the pair in the parking lot, where the male admitted to having syringes on his person. A search turned up a single pill, the generic version of Xanax, in a plastic bag. The male was arrested for possession of paraphernalia and possession of a controlled substance – which are both misdemeanors. The woman was released at the scene.

Road rage, 3/30/15
There was a collision involving a vehicle and a bicyclist on Moraga Way. The cyclist then vandalized the vehicle and assaulted the driver. The driver refused prosecution against the cyclist. Unfortunately the police report had no further details.

Missing jewelry 3/27/15
A Devin Drive resident reported that three cloth rolls of jewelry worth approximately \$10,000 was last seen in August of last year and just discovered missing on March 27. Who done it? The incident is under investigation at this time.

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Gary Bernie & Ken Ryerson

Winemaking in Moraga

Does the town need to regulate?

By Sophie Braccini

Town staff has discussed the issue of how to regulate the few bonded commercial wineries in Moraga since 2012. Unlike 'hobby winemakers' who produce less than 160 cases of wine a year, or the residents who grow grapes in their backyards, the central question for these types of commercial operations is whether they are compatible with a residential neighborhood.

On March 23, Planning Director Ellen Clark brought a report to the Moraga Town Council and asked for direction to continue the discussion process. The council indicated that a dialogue should happen between the winemakers and their neighbors to define and address difficulties. Whether or not specific regulations will be needed remains to be decided.

The response at the meeting was mostly positive. But there was an undercurrent of tension between larger winemakers and their neighbors.

According to the staff report, there are 15 home-based vineyards in Moraga that convert grapes into wine. Most of them are non-commercial, producing less than 200 gallons of wine per year. The owners take their grapes to a professional facility to have them processed. Typical lot sizes of these hobby winemakers are between 15,000 square feet and 2.5 acres. These do not require state li-

censing and are not bonded. Council members thought that these operations did not need to be regulated beyond what is presently in the code.

There are three active home-based commercial wineries in Moraga: Bullfrog Creek Vineyard, Captain Vineyards and Parkmon Vineyards. A fourth winery located on Rheem Boulevard is no longer bonded. The largest winery produces 1,000 cases a year, the smallest 600. By comparison, smaller wineries in Napa County are defined as selling less than 10,000 cases a year, according to Rural Migration News. The U.S. has seven wineries that produce more than 10 million cases of wine a year.

Although Lamorinda winemakers are seeking to get an American Viticulture Area (AVA) certification, the ones present at the meeting said they do not intend to grow beyond their small scale.

These wineries are currently regulated under the Moraga municipal code that defines what a home-based business in a residential area can and cannot do. "Per Moraga municipal code there should be no exterior evidence, no alteration of the character of the neighborhood, and no creation of a parking or traffic problem," said Ben Noble, the consultant the town hired to work on this issue. He added

that staff thinks that the current regulations are not appropriate for the larger wineries, and recommends working with the community to address their context.

Staff identified the following problems: the visibility of some of the equipment especially at the time of harvest; the increased traffic due to events on the properties; more deliveries and pick-up than is usual on a residential property; parking issues; and spraying of chemicals in the vineyards.

Bonded winemakers Sal and Susan Captain presented their model of winemaking and refuted staff's report issue by issue. They explained that they limit the number of events and do not invite more than 20 people at a time, none of their equipment is visible from the street, they run the only green-certified winery in Contra Costa County and have trained their vines to use very little water through dry-farming. They also said they never spray chemicals.

However, one of their neighbors, Gerald Bloomer, said that there are substantial challenges involved in running a business in a residential area, and he felt more regulations were needed.

Councilmember Dave Trotter cautioned his colleagues that more regulations could kill a budding in-

dustry that was adding to the character and the appeal of the town. He preferred focusing on increasing the dialogue between the winemakers and their neighbors. Vice mayor Mike Metcalf asked staff to get cues from the regulations in place in similarly small local winemaking regions, such as the Russian River area, because it was clear to him that neither staff nor the planning commission in charge of discussing future regulations had any experience in this area.

Mayor Roger Wykle expressed concern how the dialogue between parties would be organized. Clark said that formal meetings could be organized and that discussion would also occur during planning commission meetings. The mayor said that before thinking about regulating, staff should focus on the defining the problems that need to be solved. At the time of the meeting, no data was available to document neighbors' discontent, and the council asked that a system be set in place to record complaints. "I don't see a lot of regulations required," added the mayor.

Susan Captain called for a community-wide discussion. "My solution is to bring all parties together and resolve these issues in a spirit of cooperation, communication and good will," she said.

Party-House Drama Unfolds During Council Meeting

More regulation to come

By Sophie Braccini

The topic was not on the March 25 meeting agenda, but neighbors organized to raise the Moraga Town Council's awareness of it. On otherwise peaceful Wandel Drive, a small residential street that connects Larch Avenue and Sanders Drive, number 14 has become party central for a group of Saint Mary's College students. Families with small children as well as longtime residents listed their grievances at the meeting until a Saint Mary's student and resident of the infamous house came to apologize and offered to open a dialogue.

Seven years ago, the council adopted an unruly party ordinance after neighbors on Thune Avenue rallied to have students renting three houses on their street brought under control. At the time, the penalty was raised to \$1,000 if the same person was cited twice over a 180-day period, and it was decided that property owners could become liable for the fine.

"This is an enormous disturbance and only warnings have been issued," said Jennifer Berk, who lives on Wan-

del next to the students' house with her family, including two young daughters. She believes that the high turnover at the rental is the reason a stream of warnings has not stopped the behavior. Fanny Wilson, a Saint Mary's graduate who now lives across from the house in question, listed a string of nuisances from students partying on the roof, to litter all along the road, to damage to her property.

Julie Strong asked the council for help while Jerome Sibert resubmitted a 2008 petition that neighbors signed to get some order. The neighbors reported having reached out to the police and to the college. They proposed different measures such as authorizing that only two non-related adults could live together in a residential district, or registering the legal

tenants of a rental with the police, or having the police send copies of any violations to the property owner and to the college.

Dino Walter, a student resident at 14 Wandel, apologized to the neighbors and the town for the past behavior and called for a conversation so both groups of residents could live side by side in peace.

The council could not discuss the issue since it was not formally on the agenda. At the end of the meeting, Councilmember Dave Trotter asked Chief of Police Bob Priebe if he thought this topic needed to be revisited. After the meeting the chief explained that the 2008 ordinance gave his force tools that proved efficient on Thune. "We have a turnover problem in the (police) department," he said, "so sometimes newer officers do not

have the knowledge of the situation when they respond to a call. This situation has been creating stress for the Wandel neighborhood and we let them down. There was no ill intent."

Priebe added that his department has taken steps to be more consistent, and will send letters to the owners sooner in the process. He added that he met with the college's dean of students and director of community life, and came up with several ideas to ensure earlier intervention. The chief will also look into possible changes to the existing regulation. "We know we can work this out and will try to be more proactive," he said.

The council members decided this item was a high priority and should be agendised in the near future.

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