



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published September 23rd, 2015

Council Opens the Door For Adventure Day Camp

By Sophie Braccini

Although some Moraga Town Council members denied that the piece of legislation they approved on Sept. 9 signaled support for the Adventure Day Camp project off Larch Avenue, the municipal code modification they adopted will allow the recreation company to be able to file an application with the town to transform the former Moraga Tennis and Swim Club into a preschool and camp site. The amended text, which was initially proposed by councilmember Dave Trotter, states that for-profit recreational enterprises could utilize existing facilities established prior to the adoption of the 1986 Moraga Open Space Ordinance, as long as there was no increase in the development footprint. The Larch Avenue property is subjected to MOSO, a voter-approved legislation, and its implementation rules, which stated that only nonprofit enterprises could be operated on open space.

Neighbors of the Larch Avenue site were in attendance at the council meeting, as they were at the earlier planning commission meetings, to protest the modification of the municipal code. "There is no need for this text and it would create a precedent," said Clay Serrahn. Former mayor Karen Mendonca said that the planning commission had refused to recommend the adoption of the modified text.

At both their June 15 and Aug. 3 meetings, planning commissioners had indicated that good land use regulation does not consider the type of business, but instead defines which activities are desirable. They gave the example of an off-road motorbike trail that could be operated by a nonprofit group, but would not necessarily be the type of activity that should be permitted in a quiet suburb. Planning director Ellen Clark indicated that the MOSO text itself does not distinguish between for-profit or nonprofit businesses, but that the nonprofit term appearing in the implementation rule is a likely leftover of the county regulations Moraga used as a baseline at the time of incorporation.

"This is about sloppy land use ordinance and trying to straighten it out," said vice mayor Mike Metcalf, "and trying to avoid a blight condition (on the Larch site). It has nothing to do with Adventure Day Camp." Councilmember Phil Arth agreed with Metcalf, indicating that the text had a very narrow reach, but would allow for the Larch Avenue site to be operated again and not deteriorate like the Moraga Adobe site.

But mayor Roger Wykle and councilmember Teresa Onoda said what really mattered was establishing a list of authorized recreation uses on open space land. "It would be much nicer to have a list of conditional uses," said the mayor. He asked the planning director how the Hillside and Ridgeline Committee could deal with the issue.

"A list could be defined, with low impact, small footprint, not earth-moving activities," Clark responded.

Onoda asked if it would not be possible to approve the proposed amendment of the code, and make a list. "Could we have it both ways?" she asked. "Vote on the nonprofit and for-profit (amendment), and have staff look into different conditions for recreation on MOSO land?"

A majority of the council members decided that establishing a list of permitted open-space activities would be too time-consuming and that fixing the text was a better course of action. The amendment was approved, 3-2, with Wykle and Onoda opposed. The approved modified text will not preclude the necessity of an Environmental Impact Report.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA