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## Not Ostentatious, But Efficacious

After a long wait, new town chamber opens Oct. 28

By Sophie Braccini



Outside and inside views of the new town chamber at 335 Rheem Blvd.

Photos Sophie Braccini

Historians could quite possibly record Oct. 28 as the day the town of Moraga entered the 21st century. For the first time that day, the town council will meet in its new chamber, located at 335 Rheem Blvd., while residents interested in following the interactions will be able to watch from the comfort of their homes, sipping a glass of whatever they like to sip. It took years to transform the Public Works Department corporation yard into a state-of-the-art meeting room for public officials, but the result meets all expectations, both from an esthetic and functional point of view.

The front patio, designed by landscape architect Tara Bhuthimethee, features modern sculptures, local boulders and trees, concrete urns holding succulents, low walls to sit on and benches, trellises for shade, and a drought tolerant garden with "no-mow" grass and dry creeks. And local architect Steve Forster transformed the former fire station and corp yard into an esthetically pleasing Spanish-style building.

While the outside is inviting, the real goodies are inside.

The town chamber is not vast or grandiose, but it is classy and airy. The black ceiling and gray or blue-gray walls give the room a solemnity,

without being too cold. The chamber can hold up to 70 chairs, which can be placed to face the slightly raised dais. The electronic equipment in the space, however, is what is most impressive: large TV monitors on the side walls, a retractable screen behind the dais, an in-ceiling projection system, a fully-equipped presentation table with a camera to project documents, and a sound system that should allow residents with any level of hearing to comfortably follow the debates.

The technical room to the left of the meeting chamber contains the controls for the three cameras. "There is an automated option that allows to

just broadcast with one fix camera," says Town Clerk Marty McInturf. "That's what we will start with. Using multiple cameras will require an operator."

The total of the capital expenditure for the broadcasting and audio system was paid for by annual \$34,000 in public, education and government (PEG) revenue that is generated through a 71-cent monthly fee paid by Moraga cable subscribers. Moraga allocated recent PEG funds for the installation. During the first phase, the video recording will be available online within 24 to 48 hours through the town website. The sec-

ond phase will include a live broadcast on a local TV channel. At this time, the town's live broadcast is reserved for emergencies only.

The new site also features two bathrooms, one ADA accessible, and a smaller room for closed meetings. The back of the building is still a maintenance location and the left and back outside areas are still housing the town's corp yard.

Lori Sugang, the senior town engineer who provided project management support to complete the project, says that parking is plentiful around the site. "There is ADA parking at 335 Rheem, people can also park at 329 Rheem, at 333 Rheem (the site of BrightStar Care that is closed by 7 p.m.), and along the boulevard," she says. There is also ample parking across the street and a new pedestrian crosswalk will be striped in the coming weeks.

The new building will likely house all of the town's public meetings, including those of the Planning Commission and Design Review Board. McInturf anticipates that a formal opening ceremony will be organized, inviting the public in to visit. A soft opening will take place at 6 p.m. Oct. 28 with light refreshments before the 7 p.m. council meeting.

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**3416 Morningside Drive, El Sobrante**



Well loved home has been freshly painted and spruced up. Enjoy the comfy living room with fireplace, open kitchen/dining area, and Tahoe-like back yard. Within walking distance of elementary and high school, and close to services and Orinda BART. **Offered at \$450,000 by Tania DeGroot 510.367.1422.**

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Desirable Pointe Benicia condo. Larger 2+2.5 model, 1422 sf, with cathedral ceilings. Rear deck over lagoon in back. Master bedroom suite with loft and balcony over lagoon. 1st street shops and restaurants just out your door. **Offered at \$415,000 by Cris Maltzman, 925.330.4982**

CalBRE#01362381

**711 Pebble Court, El Sobrante**



This home has new kit. and bathroom flrs, fresh paint, new lighting, newer fenced in & low maintenance yard and was remodeled just 2 years ago throughout! This home is move in ready, sitting in a quiet cul de sac. Ideal for indoor and outdoor entertainment and a layout that families can enjoy. **Offered at \$395,000 by Janine Hunt 510.409.6266.**

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**TIP OF THE WEEK**

More buyers are getting loan approvals now, which is great news! This is primarily due to 3 factors:

1. Home prices are stabilizing, with fewer multiple-offer scenarios in some areas
2. Employment, manufacturing and retail sales reports have been below expected levels, keeping the Federal Funds Rate and mortgage rates low
3. New TRID mortgage regulations are now in place to further protect consumers.

If you'd like more information about the local market, feel free to contact us anytime!

**Meet our Featured Agents ...**

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