



Moraga

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Monday, Jan. 4, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Design Review

Monday, Jan. 11, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

School Board Meeting Moraga School District

Tuesday, Jan. 12, 7 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

Gas hose a goner, 12/7/15 A customer at a Moraga Road gas station accidentally damaged the gas pump by attempting to drive away with the nozzle still in her car. It could have been much worse. Thankfully the hose has a break-away feature for this very reason and simply separated from the equipment. The customer did the right thing and stopped, then informed the service station owner about the incident.

Domestic violence, 12/6/15 Moraga cops responded to Kaiser Walnut Creek for a report of domestic violence that occurred at one of the shops in the Rheem Shopping Center. Police conducted an investigation and subsequently arrested the suspect who was charged with corporal injury and criminal threats.

Fancy phone vanishes at swim practice, 12/4/15 The reporting person stated that her \$850 cell phone was stolen from her backpack while at swim practice. No suspects or witnesses at this time. A stroke of bad luck.

Bad tenant, 12/3/15 An elderly person was concerned about the tenant in his attached in-law suite, due to his odd behavior. Cops called the tenant and asked him some questions; he did not meet the criteria for mental health hold and hung up on officers. Police advised the landlord to seek legal counsel about evicting the tenant. Officers later responded back to the home after the tenant was banging on the landlord's door after a three-day eviction notice was served. All parties were advised to stay away from each other until the civil issue could be sorted out.

License trouble, 12/3/15 It started with a busted tail light, but snowballed from there. Cops pulled over a car on Canyon Road due to a "vehicle code lighting violation," but soon found that the driver had a suspended license for DUI, and failed to provide proof of insurance. The car was towed and placed on a 30-day impound hold. Driver was later released at the scene with a signed promise to appear. Looks like taking Uber would have been the better option.

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Size of New Home Construction Debate Continues

By Sophie Braccini

For years developers and residents in Moraga have been fighting over home sizes: whether to build new homes in size similar to existing homes in the neighborhood, or to maximize the size of new construction. The debate continued at the Dec. 7 Planning Commission meeting, which focused on a new home being proposed by Branagh Development at 68 Vista Encinos. Last October the Design Review Board approved the single 3,200-square-foot home proposed on lot No. 4. Larch residents appealed the decision to the Planning Commission.

The Vista Encinos project was approved in 2002 on seven acres of unoccupied land off Larch Avenue. The Planning Commission approved 10 lots on the uphill property, but at the

time no home size was specified, though it was recommended that some of the homes be limited in mass to serve as a transition with the existing smaller homes on Larch Avenue. Regulating bodies have often been unwilling to set house size limits, other than for the floor-area-ratio that is set for smaller parcels.

"We punted on multiple levels, including on setting house sizes," said Planning Commissioner Steve Woehleke, who was on the Planning Commission at the time, "and that was a major mistake."

Built on a steep slope from the Vista Encinos level toward Larch Avenue, the new home looks like a single-level residence from the street, but from Larch Avenue backyards, neighbors say they see 50 feet of home,

with a deck, looming over their houses with direct views into their bedrooms and bathrooms. When the development was approved in 2002, it was on the condition of planting trees and shrubs to block the view. The landscaping plan was approved in 2006, but many of the plants have since died and others were deciduous, offering no visual barrier in winter.

Planning Commission Chairperson Tom Marnane said he was ready to approve the project provided that the landscaping is updated, but other commissioners indicated that relying simply on trees and bushes to protect the neighbors' privacy was not enough. Commissioner Woehleke cited the town design guidelines that state that new developments need to fit the neighborhood and not ad-

versely impact neighbors. He said that looking at one project where five sites have been approved for development on the south side of Vista Encinos would not give the whole picture. Commissioner Christine Kuckuk recommended the developer increase the second story setback to minimize the massing as seen from Larch.

The commissioners reached a consensus and agreed to continue the hearing at a later date, asking the developer to return with a revised landscape plan reviewed by staff, and a new floor plan, reducing the visual impact to downslope neighbors. Branagh Development will work with staff to amend the plan and come back to the commission when ready.

Residents Can Weigh In on Defining Downtown Character

By Sophie Braccini

When story poles are erected on a new development site, it is often too late to make any changes since decisions have already been made. But Moraga residents can still weigh in on the draft "Vision Concept" created by a Town of Moraga steering committee at a public open house and discussion in January. A committee has been working with consultant Opticos Designs on defining the character of downtown Moraga through proposed zoning changes in the Moraga Center Specific Plan.

The steering committee was appointed six months ago to work with the consultant on proposals on such topics as road connectivity in the area, integrating new public space within that network of roads, requiring building fronts to face the streets and setting parking behind those buildings, creating bicycle and pedestrian networks, refining the transition between low and higher density residential by looking at topography to minimize the visual impact, and proposing housing types to fit the town's char-

acter. In 2007 the town of Moraga adopted a specific plan for its downtown area located around the crossing of Moraga Way and Moraga Road. In 2015, building in this area began, although the detailed regulation for doing so, the zoning, had not yet been determined. While decisions regarding zoning will not change elements such as allowed densities or types of use, it can shape what that area will look like, if and when the property owners decide they want to build.

"We are using a zoning method called form-based-zoning," explains Planning Director Ellen Clark who

secured grant money to conduct the process. "It is about what people want to see, and writing a code that will foster predictable built results." Right now an area might simply be defined by density and type of construction, but the specific plan says nothing about setbacks, visual impact, or style. The new code will address elements such as internal connecting roads, types of building along the creek, height, number of stories, and public and private open space.

These elements, aimed more at creating a vision for the future of Moraga, will be presented at the public open house in January. The exact

date has not been finalized, but will be posted on the Town of Moraga website at moraga.ca.us. "The open house will be followed by a special joint public meeting of the Design Review Board and Planning Commission to review and discuss the vision concept," said Clark.

Once the vision concept is approved by the community, the planning team will translate it into precise building standards that new developments will need to follow. Projects already approved, such as the City Ventures development along Moraga Way, will be exempt from the new zoning.

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