



EXPERIENCE MATTERS

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Fundamental Shift Heralded at Moraga Business Symposium

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Ellen Clark, Ron Mucovich, Jay Kerner and Prof. Kris Chase

Since the 1960s there has been a lack of integration and vision in Moraga's two shopping centers, but that may all soon change. At the Jan. 19 business symposium at Saint

Mary's College, organized by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, planning director Ellen Clark spoke about an approach to planning that stresses results over regulations and

embraces such concepts as creating human-scale spaces, optimizing connectivity, and encouraging pedestrian access.

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Funds for Elevator Sought

Mayor Mike Metcalf made a strong argument for going after money while it is available. "It would be utterly stupid not to take advantage of an opportunity to get a good chunk of the

money to put an elevator there," said the mayor, noting that he had no idea where the rest of the money would come from, but that ways could be found to get the missing \$400,000. "If

Moraga does not take advantage of this, it's silly," he added.

The council unanimously approved the decision to submit an application for the CDBG grant.

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2016 Moraga Town Goals

Cameras and Rheem in, dog park out

By Sophie Braccini

Two community-proposed items rose to the top of the list of 2016 goals for the town of Moraga during the Jan. 21 council meeting: support the Rheem Theatre and implement a surveillance camera system in town.

Residents were invited to suggest their own priorities in preparation of the adoption of the 2016 goals, and the public engagement led to a lively debate. Items such as revisiting the dog park issue, or limiting development did not make the final list.

The meeting started with councilmembers disagreeing on the mayor's first goal to complete a community preference survey and develop a revenue measure for the 2016 ballot. Councilmember Teresa Onoda said the two elements were quite different and her colleagues agreed that surveying the residents was key and would lead to a decision of whether the town needed to look into new revenue sources.

Other ongoing or recurrent town goals such as maintaining sound financial practices, developing a funding strategy for the town's assets and infrastructure, developing plans for the Hacienda de las Flores, reopening discussions with

the school district for new and shared community recreation facilities, completing the update of the hillside and ridgeline regulations, completing the Moraga Center Specific Plan zoning project were adopted with not much squabble.

William Carman, the chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission, defended the goal of improving interconnectedness and public awareness of Moraga's trail system.

Resident Richard Harris asked that adding sidewalks to pedestrian school routes be added to the goals. Planning Director Ellen Clark summarized the different studies such as the Livable Moraga Road Project and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan updates that are underway and should lead to grant seeking and sidewalk improvements in 2016.

At the Jan. 13 town council meeting, residents Christine Beckwith and Chuck Pruitt spoke passionately about safety cameras in town. Beckwith had witnessed burglars stealing mail from her neighbor's house, and got their car's license plate. She alerted the police and since then has been spearheading a local campaign to give the police the tools to keep residents safe.

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TIP OF THE WEEK
 For the first time in nearly a decade, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark lending rate last month, bringing to an end an extraordinary era of interest rates at nearly zero. Fed officials emphasized that they intended to raise rates gradually, and only if economic growth continues. Interest rates on mortgages are likely to remain low for years to come, making this a great time to buy and sell real estate!

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