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Lafayette

New Sufi Sanctuary opens in Saranap

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Duncan Knowles, media liaison for the group, said that the marble workers, who lifted pieces of marble weighing 300 to 500 pounds into place, were really proud of their work. "And they should be," said Knowles.

A tour of the facility followed. With approximately two-thirds of the building underground, the sanctuary includes the Prayer Hall, which can seat all 350 members, a 39-foot tall figurative sculpture, a commercial kitchen, offices, an archive room, dance studio, rehearsal room and video space capable of live-streaming their events to the far corners of the world.

Many representatives from the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County attended the opening festivities.

Still some complaints

The plan to construct the sanctuary caused considerable debate within the Saranap area, and now that it is complete there is still some chirping about it. Residents have complained about the vinyl fence surrounding the property and the large expanse of parking lot. Some don't care for the domes or the plantings they have seen to date.

Sanctuary Project Director Bob Carpenter admits that the fence wasn't their first choice, but the cost of the rock and glass wall they planned became prohibitive. "Our hope is that sometime in the future we'll be able to build the wall the way it was intended."

The original plans also called for a "Grasspave" lawn across the parking area, but the drought and water rationing forced the group to delay that plan. "We did install the Grasspave system," said Carpenter, "so perhaps in the future the water restrictions will be lifted and we can add that lawn."

Regarding the domes, Knowles points out they were not added for outward appearance. "They were installed for the peaceful and exalted feeling people experience inside the sanctuary. Domes create a tranquil, uplifting space beneath them. They've been added to sacred buildings for centuries and can help one's heart awaken for prayer."

Knowles related that the plantings on the outside, especially the trees, may take five years or more to fill in. "They were chosen for how beautiful they'll look when mature. Eventually, the sanctuary will be nestled in a glade of trees, mostly unseen from the street. Murshida Conner's vision is that the area surrounding the sanctuary will become a park with flowered gardens, a place where neighbors and members can come for quiet contemplation."

Rheem sinkhole

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Priebe gave the example of a recent new requirement that was given to the town to sign a contract with each of the utility agencies involved in the sinkhole, including AT&T, Comcast and PG&E, that they would take care of their own repairs.

Kwan was the city engineer in Richmond when a behemoth sinkhole formed in 2010. He is familiar with the public process and remembers that it took five years in Richmond to complete the repair project and get reimbursement. His projection in Moraga is more optimistic: He expects the approval process to be finalized by May 5; the town council would then approve the bid in June, and construction would take place over the summer. He adds that he also has alternative plans prepared if things do not go according to this timing.

Wendy Scheck, president of the chamber of commerce, said that the merchants at Rheem are indeed frustrated and suffering from the delays, but that the business community acknowledges that town staff is doing the best possible under the circumstances.

Kwan confirmed that the reopening date for the other street segment of Rheem Boulevard between Moraga Road and St. Mary's Road is set at May 1. Kwan also wants to start the repaving of Moraga Road during the coming school spring break.

MORAGA-ORINDA FIRE DISTRICT ISO RATING IMPROVES FROM "3" TO "2"



Dear Neighbors,

Every 4 years, the Insurance Services Office (ISO) reviews the fire protection within your community. The ISO is an international provider of statistical, analytical, technical and other information to the insurance industry and to state insurance regulators. Among other things, it provides a numerical rating for communities. A rating classification between 1 and 10 is given. A "1" is the best rating and a "10" is the poorest. Your Fire District (MOFD) was rated as a "3" from 1997 to present.

On April 1, 2017, MOFD's rating will improve from a "3" to a "2".

Presently, only 2.8% of fire departments nation-wide have a rating of "1" or "2". The Fire District encourages you to contact your insurance company before your next policy period because your fire insurance rates may decrease. Often, insurance underwriters will want proof. If this is the case, see the additional information below.

Stephen Healy, Fire Chief
925-258-4599



Important—Please Read!

Effective: April 1, 2017

- Some insurance companies will consider the improved ISO rating beginning with your next policy term (some will not).
- Check your policy's term, contact your insurance agent, and advise them of the change (effective: April 1, 2017).
- If your insurance company wants proof of your new ISO rating, direct them to our website:

www.mofd.org

There are several easily found references to the change under "News", "Announcements", and "About MOFD".

- Your insurance company can also contact ISO directly. They must do this because ISO will not give ratings to property owners; only insurance companies and the Fire Chief.