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Mayor Onoda declares a vibrant business community is within Moraga's grasp

By Sophie Braccini



Mayor Teresa Onoda delivers the State of the Town address. Photo Sophie Braccini

In her State of the Town address, Moraga Mayor Teresa Onoda said that the thrifty town had been built on a nonsustainable financial canvass and that things needed to change.

Her address was part of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce mixer on March 29.

Onoda also started a discussion with chamber members about the economic future of the town, reaffirming her support of the business community and challenging retailers to add charm to their storefronts and create the shopping experience Moragans deserve and want.

Onoda talked about the Moraga Center Specific Plan zoning and how work was being done to create a vision for the downtown. She explained that hillside and ridgeline rules were also being defined according to the town's principles to make the development process more predictable and simple for developers. She also explained how two elements of the town financial reality clearly showed that Moraga is underfunded: infrastructure, like storm drain maintenance, and staff compensation.

The mayor explained that Moraga gets only 5.3 percent of what its residents pay in property tax, the

second lowest percentage in Contra Costa County that was frozen by Proposition 13 in 1978. The consequence, according to Onoda, is that the town that was incorporated in 1974 with a minimal government principle is not equipped to face today's requirements and obligations, such as paying competitive salaries to staff and saving money to repair its infrastructure. She said that this year a measure to levy extra tax for repairs would be studied.

Kevin Reneau, past president of the chamber of commerce and owner of Senior Helpers in Moraga, asked the mayor how to convince people of the necessity for more taxes. Onoda responded that designing a measure with clear goals and educating residents was key to success, as was done to get the 1 percent sales tax approved.

Onoda stressed her support of economic development in town and support of streamlining the regulatory processes for new and existing businesses. Council Member Jeanette Fritzky added that development takes a lot of pieces and parts, and that Moraga needs a long-term economic development plan. She said that the risk was that one day Moraga would have no other choice than becoming part of a larger entity.

The mayor said that the town has the economics to keep businesses in town but that the online competition means that businesses would have to reinvent themselves. Edy Schwartz, a former chamber president, challenged everyone in the audience to communicate on social media about all that businesses in Moraga have to offer. Onoda added that she does it regularly when she has lunch out with her husband and she recommended that everyone participate in this buzz about the Moraga experience.

Kathe Nelson, chamber executive director, shared the unique atmosphere that is developing in Moraga where a business, Amoroma, decided to support another Moraga business, Moraga Produce.

The current chamber president, Wendy Scheck, concluded that she was hopeful that the attitude in Moraga was changing and that the close-knit and vibrant community everyone desires would be attainable. To top this optimistic mood Onoda announced a townwide hike scheduled on Oct. 14 on the Carr Ranch trails.

**Citizen of the Year
Dinner set for April 22**

Submitted by Claire Roth

The dinner honoring Bobbie Preston, Moraga's 2017 Citizen of the Year, will be held at 6 p.m. on Saturday, April 22 at the Soda Center on the Saint Mary's College campus. Everyone is welcome and invited to attend.

Tickets are \$55 and may be purchased at www.moragachamber.org.

Come join your fellow residents to celebrate Preston and our community at this special event.

The Citizen of the Year event is sponsored by Saint Mary's College, Moraga Chamber of Commerce, the Lamorinda Weekly and Moraga Valley Kiwanis.

Spring road repairs in downtown Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

While the sinkhole repair plans are still being held under the California Department of Transportation's scrutiny, Moraga public works department has started its spring repair campaign partially funded with a CalRecycle grant. The objective is to have Moraga's main arteries in good shape for the triathlon on April 22. Edric Kwan, the town's public works director, believes that his plan will minimize unavoidable traffic impacts.

The reopening of Rheem Boulevard between St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road was key to keeping the drivers' stress level to a minimum. Repairs along Moraga Road present a different challenge depending on the number of lanes available in each segment. The most challenging is the narrow, two-lane stretch between St. Mary's Road and Corliss. Kwan elected to close the segment completely on Satur-

days only, on April 1 and 8, while during the week of the school's Spring break only one lane for alternate traffic is available. The first Saturday, on April 1, saw some lines and confusion, but people had not too much trouble using alternate routes.

Kwan explained that the repaving work of the section between Corliss and Draeger Drive will be conducted with lane closures during the weekdays using lane closures similar to the ones used during last fall's overhead utility undergrounding work. The project will also include a slurry seal of the roadway between Draeger Drive and Devin Drive, which will also utilize lane closures to complete the work. Everything is expected to be completed by April 22 and changeable messages with road closures information continue to inform motorists at major intersections.

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorindaweekly.com

Many local parents continue to support 5th-grade teacher

... continued from page A4

At this time, more than 80 letters of support for the teacher have been received and given to the MSD. The parents supporting Tang are dismayed that the East Bay Times never mentioned the letters that were sent to them. They wonder what is the reason, even calling it a "witch hunt."

At a recent fundraiser for the Moraga Education Foundation parents distributed "I'm with

Millie" stickers and they say that parents all over the district, not only Los Perales parents, choose to wear them in support of the teacher.

Gregory Read, a partner with the San Francisco law firm Sedgwick, offered Tang to be her lawyer pro-bono. The well regarded trial lawyer said that Tang has already a lawyer appointed by the school district but that she

needed a friend. Read has two grandchildren who are former students of Tang. He said that he did extensive interviews of the teacher and of parents and decided he should assist her. He says that the very petite teacher — often smaller than some of her fifth graders — is very distressed by what she feels in an injustice. Her whole life has been dedicated to teaching, as well as her humani-

tarian endeavors, and she finds these accusations and attacks on her character devastating, he said.

When parents talk about Tang, the emotions also run very high, between anger, disappointment and deep sadness. A group of parents plan to attend the April 11 MSD board meeting to continue to affirm their support and demand that the district not settle

the case. They feel that MSD should support its teachers and not back down over what they consider frivolous lawsuits. Read is convinced that if the case goes to court the probability of winning is very high, but he warns that putting children on the witness stand could be a difficult experience.

<p>30 Arlene Lane, Walnut Creek</p> <p>NEW LISTING</p> <p>Open for the first time Saturday, April 8th and Sunday April 9th from 1-4pm. Beautiful four-bedroom family home in the Parkmead area! Lovely yard on half an acre with pool, raised vegetable garden and play area. For more information, contact Dana Fillinger at 925.588.6409 CalBRE#01731662</p>	<p>319 Pheasant Run Drive, Blackhawk</p> <p>ACTIVE</p> <p>5 BR, 2 offices, bonus room and 7 baths. Designer lighting, 9-zone audio system, media room, 2nd dining area, pebble pool & greenhouse and more. Offered at \$2,750,000 by Larry Jacobs, 925.788.9362, and Kress Hauri, 925.899.5739 CalBRE#01465617/#01495118</p>	<p>499 Estudillo Ave. #304, San Leandro</p> <p>Sold</p> <p>What a great location for this top floor condominium with views! This unit has 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and a laundry nook. Other features include a wet bar, balcony, security and elevator. Sold for at \$406,000 by Regina Englehart, 925.876.9076 CalBRE#01308462</p>	<p>944 Dewing Ave. Unit C, Lafayette</p> <p>PENDING</p> <p>This contemporary 2-story townhouse is in a peaceful, serene setting in downtown Lafayette. It has 2 bdr. and 2-1/2 bath, with updated hardwood flooring, counters and fixtures. 2 sliding doors lead to a large, lush yard and allow lots of light into the home. Offered at \$698,888 by Rose Brudigam, 925.746.7650 CalBRE#00571094</p>
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