

An experienced planner to direct development in Moraga

Closer to completion is the Bollinger Valley project. The property owner for that site has proposed another alternative, only 85 homes – more than 100 were previously contemplated. Farmer says that since it is a smaller project with a lesser impact, it is grandfathered with the EIR previously approved and will not be impacted by the new hillside and ridgeline regulation that was recently approved. The project should start the series of public hearings this year.

Farmer, who likes downtown development, is excited to see an in-fill development application coming in very soon for the empty lot next to the Rheem Theatre. He says that the site was studied by the planning commission four years ago, and adds that even if the town signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the owner, the project will not get any preferential treatment and will have to stand on its own.

A few other things Farmer is excited about are the application

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for a microbrewery that should come in front of the planning commission in the early summer and a Lamorinda bike/scooter-sharing program that will also include the college.

Plans to open La Finestra Restaurant at the Hacienda move forward

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Joao Magalhaes, who was also on the committee and has been advocating for a public-private partnership to develop the Hacienda for four years, explained that the only investment required from the town – an ADA bathroom on the ground floor for \$50,000 – was a bargain compared to the quarter million dollars the Hacienda has been costing the town yearly in maintenance and operating cost.

The new parks and recreation director, Breyana Brandt, explained she was confident that the wedding activity that had been the largest source of revenue for the Hacienda could continue at the Pavilion location. Her department would remain on the ground floor of the Hacienda, the restaurant would only use half, and La Sala and the Casita would be used for recreation classes. The garden room and mosaic room would still be available for community meetings. The restaurant would take over the kitchen, which Assadi would bring up to code and make ready

to handle restaurant operations as well as catering, as well as the fireside room, the dance room, which could be converted into a bar, and the courtyard for outside dining.

Cynthia Battenberg, town manager, indicated that in her previous position as development manager for the town of San Leandro she had been in touch with Lafayette commercial real estate professionals at Main Street Property and that their opinion of the rent offered by Assadi was in line with Lamorinda prices.

Korpus indicated that she now understood how things developed and agreed that proceeding with lease negotiation was an opportunity the town should not miss. The rest of the council agreed.

A lease proposal should come back to council for final agreement in May. Assadi will not be able to open the restaurant before November because weddings have already been booked until then with a promise to have exclusive use of the facility.

Zoning and general plan amendments for Moraga Adobe parcel approved

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Contacted after the meeting, Kent Long, president of the Friends of the Moraga Adobe, said that the group remains confident that they will be able to raise the approximately \$500,000 required for them to purchase the adobe. Already, even before the commencement of the period of three years allowed for them to raise the money, they have raised upwards of \$140,000.

The three-year period in the Memorandum of Agreement begins after the final state approval of the subdivision plans, which is not imminent.

Previously, the lack of council

action on the zoning and general plan amendment has been “a little bit of a hurdle in terms of fundraising,” Long said. He added that the group has an excellent working relationship with J&J Ranch and has been engaged with them about items such as the development’s CC&Rs and how the adobe parcel will relate to the other members of the homeowners association. The agreement between the Friends and J&J Ranch is that the Friends will purchase the parcel and J&J will restore it for use as a cultural site with limited access for local schools and the general public.

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