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## La Finestra deal to lease Hacienda falls through

By *Nick Marnell*

Fine dining at the Hacienda de las Flores will have to wait until at least 2019 after the La Finestra Restaurant pulled out of a potential deal to lease space at the Moraga landmark. Restaurant owner Jeff Assadi said the insurance liability was too high and that the required tenant improvements ran nearly double the original cost estimate.

"We would be leasing a portion of the building, and my liability within the leased area was OK. But since alcohol will be served there, anything that occurs anywhere on the property, we would be liable," Assadi said.

Because the building will become multiuse, additional requirements had to be met in order to house a restaurant, including accessibility to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Also mandatory, according to the lease agreement, were renovations to the kitchen equipment and systems, including upgrades of the grease traps, the dishwasher, the hot water heater, the fans, the sewer connections and the fire suppression system. "There were expenses I never thought I would incur," Assadi said.

Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg said the town will apply for grant funding to comply with ADA regulations in the building, including upgrades to the bathrooms and the parking area. "By this time next year, the town could begin the work. Then we would issue an RFP for the restaurant, or renegotiate with Jeff," Battenberg said.

Moraga had agreed to rent Assadi 2,250 square feet of the Hacienda building, plus use of the adjacent enclosed patio, for five years at \$5,625 monthly, with two five-year renewal options. The town also agreed to fund \$60,000 for required tenant improvements.

"I spent a lot of time and energy to make this deal come through," Assadi said. "If the town can provide us a space that is ADA accessible and up to code, I'd love to be a part of Moraga."

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