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Planning love fest for coming Canyon Club Brewery

By *Sophie Braccini*

Renderings of the outside patio of the future Canyon Club Brewery in Moraga. Photos provided

beginning of the creation of a legacy business for himself, his partner, their backers and the whole community. He said he wants Canyon Club Brewery to do for Moraga what Sierra Nevada Brewing Company did for Chico.

Markey and Hamilton come to this deal knowing what they are doing, with many years of hospitality and beer industry experience. Both dads became acquainted as their daughters are best friends. One day at one of those long Lamorinda summer swim meets that seem to drag on forever the two started sharing their project ideas and suddenly realized that they had both been working separately on similar business plans for a microbrewery in Lamorinda. They decided to combine their forces. Markey says that their skills dovetailed nicely. They created an LLC and opened 25 percent of the capital to local investors. Twenty-five families just like them, people with young kids wanting to have a cool place in town to hang out, invested alongside the two dads.

Markey and Hamilton decided to work with the best professionals to bring about their project. A rendering from architect Maxwell Beaumont shows a friendly and natural looking space inside and out, including a large patio at the corner of the street, conserving the two existing trees and surrounded by a 5-foot wood fence, for protection and alcohol rules enforcement. The two dads plan to have live music outside, weather permitting.

Joan Bruzzone and her son David came to the planning commission meeting in support of their new tenant. They both said they loved the enthusiasm of the partners and what this new business will do for this part of town. Joan Bruzzone added that she was most impressed with ... the energetic and totally 'with it' new planning commission which, she hopes, will promote a new town concept of energizing business and growth. Like others who came to support Markey and Hamilton, they look forward to the grand opening.

The former bank has enough space to accommodate the brewing and storing equipment, and the plan is to brew three times a week. Markey says that they are hiring their master brewer from the UC Davis brewery engineering program, one of the most renowned programs in the nation. He says he prefers sessionable beers, but that they will also carry high quality wine on tap, as well as a few other craft beers. He expects Saint Mary's students will be attracted to the place, but he says that he and Hamilton want it to be suitable for families.

The brewery will also serve food that will appeal to most. Markey says that they are partnering with a chef known as the maker of the best Texas King Ranch Chicken. He adds that the food will have a Tex-Mex flavor.

Steve Kowalski, senior planner for the town, started working with the partners two months ago. He said that getting a change in conditional use was needed for a bank to become a restaurant, but did not create any problem. He added that the site is located in the Moraga Center Specific Plan area that calls for such use: a restaurant where alcohol is served, where people can hang out with family and friends and listen to live music. He adds that the Moraga noise ordinance should be enough to protect nearby residents, such as the seniors living at Moraga Royale or Aegis.

Hamilton and Markey are now ready for the construction to start. They plan to open the club in the fall.

It is no longer a rumor. Canyon Club Brewery is slated to open its doors in Moraga, which some say is the coolest news for the town retail scene since the opening of Town Bakery. The planning commission on June 18 approved unanimously and enthusiastically the project presented by Kevin Hamilton and Ken Markey to transform the triangular-shaped former bank located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Canyon Road and Country Club Drive. The business partners are now anticipating the first Moraga brewed beer to be poured in the fall of 2018.

The morning after the meeting Markey was still basking in the happiness of the support the project had received from the community the night before. He said he was both excited and scared at the road in front of him and his partner: their idea has now become an obligation after the two signed a 40-year lease with the property owner, the Bruzzone family. For Markey this is it, the



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