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Letters to the editor

Bean Counters 3, Visionaries 2

By a 3 to 2 vote last week the Moraga Town Council embarrassed the entire community and brought shame on local government by refusing to contribute a single dime to the John Muir Land Trust campaign to acquire the Painted Rock property.

JMLT has raised nearly \$1.75 million-all private donations-toward a \$2 million goal to purchase the 84-acre property for inclusion as the anchor of a 500-plus acre public hiking and nature preserve near the Rheem Shopping Center. JMLT was hoping the Town would contribute to partially close the funding gap-MUCH less than what Lafayette and Walnut Creek have contributed to JMLT for their open space acquisitions. But ANYTHING was too much for timid little Moraga.

Despite impassioned arguments by Mayor Roger Wykle and Council Member Mike McCluer favoring a contribution, the three nay-sayers: Kymberleigh Korpus and newcomers Steve Woehleke and Renata Sos, said no. They based their objections on fiscal uncertainties, mainly due to a new sinkhole on private property in the Rheem Center. Woehleke went so far as to propose an alternative "Walk-the-Talk" campaign to garner private contributions door-to-door; Sos offered to help. JMLT doesn't need council members knocking on doors, hat in hand, on its behalf; it needs council members with the courage to make a small investment now for the long-term legacy of Moraga, even if it means taking a little heat in the short term. The absurdity of all this is almost indescribable. Painted Rock is Moraga's most visible landmark-an icon for as long as anyone can remember. The fact that it can be acquired NOW instead of going on the market for development is almost miraculous. That the Moraga council would turn its back completely on helping make this acquisition is shameful. The funds to do this are NOT taxpayer money. They come from the yet-to-be built Palos Colorados housing development as compensation for an abandoned golf course. Previous council members who secured these monies envisioned them, in part, for recreational uses and open space acquisition.

At the Council meeting I challenged council members to choose between bean counting and vision. The bean counters won.

Richard Immel
Moraga

"Time is Running out"

Dear Lamorinda Neighbors

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to secure a world-class outdoor recreation site in our neighborhood is at our doorstep, but time is running out. The John Muir Land Trust has been offered the 84-acre Painted Rock parcel at the corner of Rheem Blvd and Moraga Road for purchase. This site has panoramic views of Mt Diablo and the East Bay with abundant wildlife and spectacular wildflowers; if acquired, the Painted Rock property will anchor a large 505-acre public open space. This would be a stunning new recreational resource providing miles of new trails and sweeping views for the community, and be a protected haven for wildlife. Once acquired, JMLT will provide maintenance of the property IN PERPETUITY and, with additional funding, have the opportunity to build a range of hiking trails and designated special areas (such as equestrian trails and bicycle trails), picnic areas, and bathrooms. Painted Rock was once offered for sale as a development site for \$15 million. JMLT's project cost is \$2 Million but this offer will expire May 31. JMLT has a \$350,000 matching gift for new donations but this offer will expire May 1.

Community members, Community social organizations and Garden Clubs, local Foundations and Businesses have all come forward to fund \$1.73Million of the purchase price thus far, but we need one last push from the Lamorinda community to get to the finish line. While my hard-core hiking days are over, I look forward to sitting on a bench and watching the swooping hawks and eagles, and savoring the superbloom of wildflowers; and I relish the idea that the grandchildren of MY grandchildren will be able to do the same. But if we don't act NOW, this precious parcel will slip through our collective fingers. The Town Council has decided they cannot allocate funds to this purchase, so it is time for all of us to pull together and make it happen. I ask you to do two things:

1. If it moves you as much as it does me and you see the advantage of having easy access to open space (and understand that your property value is enhanced by its existence, and that our local sales tax will be enhanced by the revenue brought in by hikers buying lunch!) consider donating to the purchase, no matter how modest, by going to

jmlt.org and earmarking your donation to Painted Rock. Every dollar counts now

2. Tell your friends, social network, and workplace! Many employers will provide matching funds for charitable donations.

We can make this happen, friends.

Respectfully,
Bobbie Preston
Moraga

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