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## Unfunded Needs Assessments survey results

By Vera Kochan

The town of Moraga gave its citizens the opportunity to weigh in where tax dollars should be spent. There were two community outreach meetings at the Hacienda de las Flores and one during a Kiwanis meeting, all held in December. The town also informed the public through the About Town newsletter, the town website, and on social media platforms. Additionally, Lamorinda Weekly's Dec. 11 issue contained an article urging residents to fill out the survey. In a town whose population contains approximately 17,000 people, only 26 surveys were turned in as of Jan. 8.

Town staff is seeking public input involving three top priority areas: capital asset replacement; California Public Employees' Retirement System unfunded pension liability; and the Storm Drain Master Plan.

With regards to capital asset replacement, the town's services are asset dependent. Parks, the library, the Hacienda, town offices, landscaping, police vehicles and public works trucks are just some of the town's major capital assets.

The town's unfunded pension liability is the gap between the amount of future benefits a pension fund is expected to pay out and the assets presently in the pension fund.

The Storm Drain Master Plan involves visual and closed-circuit television inspections, debris cleanup and repairs to damaged storm drain pipes.

The feedback questionnaire allowed residents to prioritize each need according to a low, medium or high order of importance. With only 26 citizens weighing in, it is difficult to properly assess ratings; however all but the area of pension liability were ranked by respondents at a medium to high level of importance.

Pension liability ranking at low to medium based on the surveys received.

The feedback survey also gave ample space for comments, and responses involving the Storm Drain issue included, "Mother Nature is hitting Moraga with a vengeance. Fire, earthquakes, power outages, etc. Let's not add floods to the mix." Others stated, "We clearly need to get this done, experiencing another significant failure is not an option." And, "The storm drain issue isn't new, it's just been ignored. Not good policy - which is why we have the problems we have now."

In comments involving capital assets, some residents recommended selling the Hacienda, or making sure that town-owned assets be maintained to avoid a negative feeling about living in Moraga. One respondent simply said, "Invest now; save for the future."

Resident comments on pension liability questioned whether the town should continue to hire staff. "How many employees does a town of 17,000 really need?" Others suggested installing a 401k plan for new hires. Dropping out of CalPERS was mentioned, but that option would come at a steep cost to the town.

Additional comments included adding an additional police officer to focus on the schools, having developers pay more fees, and utilizing the talents of local residents on a volunteer basis to fix things like the flag pole, or interior lighting at library. "Many projects can be accomplished on this basis," one resident said.

Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg stressed, "People can still provide feedback. There is no deadline, but we will consider input from the community as part of the budget preparation process, so I would say we will incorporate feedback received prior to March 31."

"The Feedback Form was developed to obtain input from the community regarding how the town should prioritize its resources," Battenberg said. "This is an opportunity for residents to let us know how they would like their tax-payer dollars spent and we hope to hear from them."

The survey is on the landing page of the town's website [www.moraga.ca.us](http://www.moraga.ca.us) in the article titled "Update on Unfunded Needs."

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