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Moraga's new public works director is a familiar face

By Vera Kochan



Moraga Public Works Director/ Town Engineer Shawn Knapp Photo Vera Kochan

Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp first came to Moraga in April 2017 as the town's senior civil engineer. From the moment he showed up for his first day of work Knapp's skills were put to the test.

According to Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg, "Shawn's first day at the town was the morning after the Canyon Road bridge closure." Battenberg took Knapp out to the site for a field inspection of the damaged bridge. "Shawn guided the town through the temporary bridge project, including obtaining federal funding and applying for reimbursements."

"I was supposed to get a lot of filing done and get accustomed to Moraga's files and projects," Knapp recalled. Instead, he had to begin designing the new bridge and secure funds for it. He also had to tackle the 2016-17 Rheem sinkhole repair project.

Moraga has kept Knapp busy in the three years he's been here. Besides providing technical assistance on last summer's crosswalk and paving projects, he has overseen the town's land use development function.

Knapp's prior experience was working as a civil engineer for the city of Pleasant Hill. Before his 16 years with Pleasant Hill, Knapp spent eight years as a consulting energy conservation engineer/scientist for Pacific Gas and Electric Company. His many professional licenses and certificates include: Civil Engineering P.E.; Mechanical Engineering P.E.; Qualified Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan Developer and Practitioner; and California Department of Transportation Resident Engineer.

When questioned about the progress of repairs for the latest Rheem sinkhole, located at the intersection of Rheem Boulevard and Center Street, Knapp explained that the town is in the process of filing an abatement request with the Superior Court. The property owner of Moraga Star Gas Station, where the sinkhole is located, was sent a courtesy notice of the town's intent. "The town is separately coordinating with the Rheem Valley Shopping Center on repair work that may impact Center Street, which is part of the shopping center property," Knapp said. "These impacts include setting up traffic control with lane closures while the work is happening." Due to the danger the current situation poses to the public, the town plans to proceed with repairs, and upon completion expects a reimbursement from the Moraga Star property owner. If a reimbursement is not forthcoming the town can put a lien on the property.

On Knapp's Wish List are the storm drain projects. "I'd like to get that up and running. That will be fun for me. With most of the disasters behind us and the funds we've been able to get back I can concentrate on construction projects." In April, he plans to revisit pavement options for some of the town's worst streets.

"I am confident that he will continue to serve the town well in this new role," Battenberg added. "Shawn has new ideas and strategies for how to do things more efficiently and cost effectively and has already begun implementing them."

"I am looking at efficiency within the department. How we're staffed and our costs," Knapp said. "I want to train staff to be able to do each other's jobs as much as possible - change the philosophy on how we run the department and save costs so as not to hire outside consultants."

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