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Town of Moraga continues to explore possibilities for Hacienda

By Vera Kochan



Hacienda de la Flores Photo A. Scheck

In mid-January, the town of Moraga released request for proposals to lease a portion of the first floor for an on-site restaurant at the Hacienda de las Flores that could also serve as the lead caterer to any events held on the property. The RFP targeted 44 prospects and 398 retail brokers, but garnered only one proposal: Hacienda Partners, LLC, a joint-partnership between Thomas Capital Investments and Pacific Meritage, a restaurant business based in Danville, proposed a public-private partnership with the town.

Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt explained to the town council during its April 22 meeting that while the proposal didn't include an on-site restaurant, it did consider providing catering and alcohol service for events with a future exploration into accommodating larger rental events and possibly an on-site restaurant.

According to Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg, six or seven interested parties toured the property, but made note of the economic challenges involved with the Hacienda as a restaurant venue. It soon became clear that the property was preferable as an event space rather than a restaurant-only facility.

Based on the fact that only one proposal was received, town staff presented three options to the council: Begin discussions with Hacienda Partners, LLC to form an investment partnership to find a balance between a private venture with public access, which would include the possibility of bringing catering and alcohol services to the Hacienda; work with Wedgewood, a wedding venue operator that was aware of the RFP but did not submit a proposal because they do not operate restaurants, but did show interest in partnering with the town to operate the Hacienda as an event venue; or re-release the Hacienda Restaurant Operator RFP after the county's shelter-in-place order is lifted, since the coronavirus outbreak may have had some bearing on the lack of responses to the RFP.

Wedgewood operates 28 venues in California and would offer an "all-inclusive" model for the town to generate percentage sales revenue from food, beverage, invitations, accessories, DJ and MC services, chairs/linens, photography, lighting and ceremony officiate services.

Town staff recommended either the first or second option, and with that in mind, the council directed staff to continue preliminary discussions with Hacienda Partners, in addition to exploring other opportunities for the site, including event management possibilities. Meanwhile the Parks and Recreation Department will continue to utilize the Hacienda site for the town's After School Enrichment Program classes during the fall and winter, and the town will continue to book special events on the property for future dates.

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[back](#)

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