



## MORAGA

See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

**Town of Moraga:**  
www.moraga.ca.us  
Phone: (925) 888-7022  
**Chamber of Commerce:**  
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## Town allows greater signage variety for business owners

By Vera Kochan

Moraga has simplified and streamlined the approval process for certain types of signs and allowed for a new master approval process to include greater variation from current standards and

regulations for new commercial signage that includes wall signs, monument signs and portable signs.

The town's Senior Planner Steve Kowalski made a presentation during the June 10 council meeting citing a goal to "address a common perception in the business

community that the Moraga Municipal Code contained numerous burdensome provisions regulating the opening of a new business in the town that were acting as a deterrent to businesses that may have otherwise chosen to locate in Moraga." Current business and property owners have had to deal with inflexible and rigorous requirements in order to install even small signs to identify their establishments.

Stakeholder input was sought from property owners of both the Moraga Shopping Center and Rheem Valley Shopping Center, as well as Moraga's Chamber of Commerce. Dave Bruzzone, of the Bruzzone family's Moraga Center, did not submit any input regarding the proposed amendments prior to the town council meeting.

Jay Kerner of U.S. Realty Partners, Inc., the primary owner of Rheem Valley Shopping Center, had already submitted an application for a new Master Sign Program in November. Upon hearing that amendments to the sign code were in the works, Kerner voiced his support and opted to wait before proceeding with its application regarding new signage in the hopes that much of what it had proposed would be accepted.

"We believe that the added flexibility and ease in permitting to be key to a more contemporary ordinance and less cumbersome process," stated the chamber's Executive Director Kathe Nelson, while pointing out the time-consuming approval process for even the simplest of signs. "Further, the reduction of fees, lessening the expense

burden will be a very welcome change, particularly to our small businesses that are the backbone of our business community."

The town council voted unanimously to amend several sections of Chapter 8.88 "Signs" of the MMC with direction for staff to revisit the town's Design Guidelines pertaining to signs in order to confirm that none of the approved amendments require any amendments to those guidelines. During the June 24 town council meeting, a small number of final revisions to amendments was made and passed with a vote of 4-0, with Council Member Steve Woehleke abstaining. The council will conduct a second reading of the revised ordinance and consider adoption at its July 8 meeting.

### Moraga School District Governing Board Elections & Orientation for interested candidates

Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at 5:00 PM via video conference. See MSD Website for Board qualifications and video conference link <https://msd-ca.schoolloop.com/>

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## Campo Parents Club on Diversity & Inclusion helmed by one of Moraga's newest residents

By Vera Kochan

Hoping to replicate Oregon's physical dynamics, but with a touch more sunshine, Ellide Smith and her family moved to Moraga six months ago, focusing on its educational reputation, hills and parks.

Little did Smith realize that in early May she would become chair of the Campo Parents Club on Diversity and Inclusion, an idea developed by approximately 25 parents during a fall Parents Club meeting. "Even coming from Oregon, where the black community is very small, I could feel how difficult it must be for the 0.65% of black students at Campolindo," Smith stated. "I also felt it was a good opportunity to meet people in my new community while doing

something that was good and impactful for parents and students."

The need for a diversity and inclusion club arose due to issues both on and off campus. Victimized families felt concerns over the handling of those situations especially within the communities of color. "There is proven research that shows that if students do not feel included or that they belong or have the effects of tons of micro-aggressions filling up their head space, they don't do well in school," Smith said. "The Campo academic testing data supports this."

Smith says she and her children, ages 6, 8 and 15, have not experienced any forms of racism in the community or the schools. "I have two elementary school-aged children, and they have not spoken to me of any issues, and I try to ask them in a roundabout way, as to protect their innocent views on life." Although, classmates have wanted to touch and feel their hair "because it's so different." Smith has noticed the effects of a lack of instruction regarding their black culture and wishes it went beyond learning about Martin Luther King Jr. and Frederick Douglass during Black History Month. "My oldest, a rising sophomore at Campo, hasn't experienced racism either that I know of, but his transition to Campo has been rocky and not as inviting as his former high school in Oregon," she added. "He struggled with feeling the sense of belonging and inclusion, especially on the lacrosse team. His words were, 'Everyone knows each other. No one knows me. I'm just trying to survive.'"

Smith heads a core committee of six people at CPCDI with an ever-increasing group of 150 and counting, which includes parents, former students, faculty, district and community members seeking to provide a safe and comprehensive educational experience. While current students are not part of the committee, they will reap the



Ellide Smith Photo provided

benefits of its existence. CPCDI's vision is to "work towards an inclusive academic, athletic and social environment where every member of our community is valued and feels an equal sense of belonging." Response from the community both before and after recent events has been largely positive including support from teachers of all four Acalanes Union High School District campuses.

Encouraged by the affirmative steps toward change, Smith stated, "To see a predominantly white community say 'we could/should do better' for the black community and other communities of color is something that most don't expect. Of course, there are those that are saying this talk of diversity and inclusion is just a fad and will pass. That there's nothing wrong in our area and racism doesn't exist. That racial slurs, epithets, complicit biases and stereotypes are just 'kids being kids' or 'teenagers making mistakes,' but we have seen publicly, on a local and national scale, the harmful and dangerous effects of that sort of rhetoric and thinking."

Smith, who works for an event management firm, developed the CPCDI website (www.DNICampo.com) in her spare time.

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