



MORAGA

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Planning Commission provides forward motion for MCSP

By Vera Kochan

Moraga Center Specific Plan Zoning Codes and Design Guidelines were the topics at hand during the Aug. 17 planning commission meeting.

Senior Advisor David Early of Placeworks, a community design firm, during a previous meeting made it known that state law requires consistency between a Specific Plan and the zoning provisions that implement the Specific Plan. The zoning provisions provide the development standards (height, setback, density, allowed uses, and often include lighting, landscaping,

parking) that implement the plan's goals and policies. Development of zoning codes consistent with a Specific Plan can include a mix of current codes and development of new codes.

Addressing public concerns put forth during the July 20 planning commission meeting in which overwhelming comments centered around timely evacuation during an emergency, given the potential increase in housing and new residents. Early mentioned the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's implementation of a more aggressive vegetation management program. He also noted the various evac-

uation drills performed in conjunction with the Moraga Police Department, along with the fact that Fire Hazard Severity Zones can require fire resistant construction.

The July 20 planning commission recommendations incorporated into the zoning code include interpretive signage design guidance; a specific thematic character of Moraga Ranch; an updated Senior Housing definition; the allowance of privately owned and maintained pocket parks and congregative care in more districts; moving street types and standards to MCSP Design Guidelines; removing a

30-foot MOFD height limitation; revising R-6 (Six 21 Dwellings per Acre Multifamily Residential District) and R-12 (Twelve Dwelling Units 32 per Acre Multifamily Residential District) minimum lot requirements; and replacing the development capacity table to mirror the table from MCSP.

While public comments were again expressed during the Aug. 17 meeting, there were not as many as last month's session. Although, the concerns echoed high-density housing paired with timely evacuation; loss of open space; and building retail in a COVID-19 climate. The lone pro-retail/housing

increase comment was to point out the influx of tax dollars that would be generated for the town.

With an approval vote of 5-1, with Commissioner Suzanne D'Arcy the lone no vote, the commission made a recommendation for the Town Council to approve an ordinance to adopt a new zoning map within the MCSP Area and update Title 8 of the Moraga Municipal Code. The Planning Commission also recommended establishing several new chapters within Title 8 of the MMC and decided to move discussion regarding revised design guidelines to its Sept. 21 meeting.

Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant helps town during pandemic



By Vera Kochan

Moraga's town council voted unanimously to accept the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act's grant during its Aug. 26 meeting. The

town's portion of the \$500 million federal aid package awarded to the State of California's cities comes to \$209,235. This figure is based on population size.

The town submitted the Local Government Certification Form in early July to the Department of Finance and expects to receive the anticipated funds by September.

Federal law specifies that the funds can only be used for unbudgeted COVID-19 costs incurred between March 1 and Dec.

30. The CARES Act funds must be spent by the end of the year.

According to the staff report by Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg and Administrative Services Director Norm Veloso, "Expenditures using Fund payments must be 'necessary.' The Department of the Treasury defines this term broadly to mean that the expenditure is reasonably necessary for its intended use in the reasonable judgment of the government officials responsible for ex-

pending CARES Act funding." Battenberg and Veloso added, "Funds may not be used to fill shortfalls in government revenue to cover expenditures that would otherwise qualify under the statute."

The breakdown of costs in the utilization of the \$209,235 are as follows: Expenses incurred to date totaling \$52,965 include payroll (paid emergency leave) of \$9,000; public health and safety procurement of medical safety supplies of \$21,000; facility enhancements – technology, social distancing and sanitation of \$22,965.

Additional recommended investment in town facilities and operations totaled \$97,750. This includes telework enhancement/infrastructure of \$16,000; facility enhancements – social distancing and sanitation of \$67,750; and public health and safety of \$14,000.

Also, payroll expenses for police officers substantially dedicated to COVID-19 responses and public health emergencies came to \$28,520.

The hardest hit sector was and continues to be small businesses. With that

in mind, staff has established a Small Business Relief Program containing \$30,000. The following guidelines will pertain: Businesses must operate out of a storefront or other physical space that depends on foot traffic for business. Home-based businesses would not be eligible for the program; businesses must have at least three employees and no more than 20 employees as of March 1. Franchises, chain stores, nonprofit organizations and corporations would not be eligible; grants would be awarded for between \$500 - \$2,000 and would be exclusively for the reimbursement of expenses that enable businesses to continue to operate and comply with public health regulations related to COVID-19; and the program would award funds on a first-come, first-served basis until the \$30,000 in grant funds is awarded or Dec. 30, whichever comes first. More details and an application are available at the Planning Department's website: www.moraga.ca.us/planning or by emailing: planning@moraga.ca.us or phone: (925) 888-7040.

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