



Published January 20, 2021

## Town council establishes a Diversity and Inclusion Ad Hoc Committee

By Vera Kochan

In a year full of unprecedented global turmoil and disruption, and in response to local efforts to increase awareness about diversity issues, the Moraga Town Council formed a Diversity and Inclusion Ad Hoc Committee Jan. 13 during its first meeting of the year.

Numerous national and local events were the driving force behind the need for such a committee, according to town staff, beginning with the May 25, 2020 death of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers.

In response to that event, Campolindo and Miramonte high school students organized a peaceful rally in Moraga Commons Park on June 4, which drew approximately 500 Lamorinda residents, council members and town staff.

Shortly thereafter, Moraga Police Chief Jon King expressed his dismay over the actions of the Minneapolis police officers during the June 10 town council meeting and presented an update that included MPD's mission statement, policies and approach to the 8 Can't Wait police use of force campaign concerns.

On July 15, town staff attended a mandatory workshop on "Understanding and Mitigating Unconscious Bias." An optional "Allies and Accomplices" workshop was offered on Nov. 5.

In October, Campo students participated in a school cultural survey entitled "Campolindo Student Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Survey." The purpose of the survey was to gather data on the progress of the school's newly updated mission statement: "Campolindo strives to inspire and empower every student by fostering belonging, well-being, and accountability in an equitable learning environment." The survey revealed that 59% of students witnessed a racist act by another student either on campus or at a school event. Additionally, 52% of students surveyed witnessed a racist incident in Moraga perpetrated by a non-student.

The Campolindo Diversity and Inclusion Committee sponsored a Dec. 2 virtual film screening event and discussion with the founder of the national Not In Our Town movement, which attracted approximately 75 Zoom attendees.

A Dec. 4 incident, whereby a Black faculty member's tire was allegedly vandalized while parked in Campolindo's parking lot, prompted nearly 30 participants during the Public Comment portion of the Dec. 9 town council meeting, with even more viewers watching the virtual proceedings. The common thread of outrage and pleas for the formation of an ad hoc committee to be discussed on a future agenda was quickly realized. According to King, as of Jan. 14 the investigation into the incident remains ongoing.

Moraga's town council voted unanimously for the formation of a Diversity and Inclusion Ad Hoc Committee, composed of Mayor Mike McCluer and Council Member Renata Sos, in order to participate in the community-wide efforts to raise awareness about and address issues regarding diversity and inclusion in the town of Moraga.

The committee members will represent the town council at community meetings, discussions and workshops and report back to the council, as needed. The communication between the council and the community has a temporary term beginning Jan. 13 through June 30, 2022. There is no direct fiscal impact to this action.

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