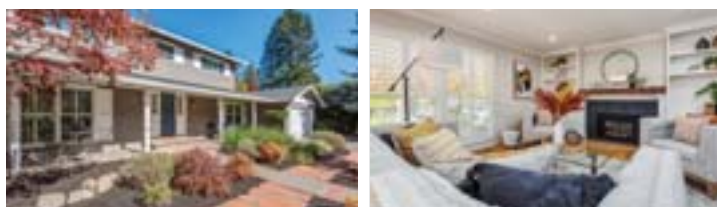




MORAGA

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Nearly 300 households participate in the Sustainable Moraga Challenge

By Vera Kochan

In October 2020, the town council authorized Moraga to partner with Sustainable Contra Costa to inspire its citizens to make environmentally friendly choices in their daily activities with regards to home, work and community life. The partnership helped to further the goals set by the town's Climate Action Plan di-

rected at energy efficiency, transportation and water usage.

The Sustainable Moraga Challenge began in December, with participating households creating online profiles in order to track their progress. Team challenges were also encouraged to promote additional friendly yet competitive goal setting.

Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt's Oct.

13 staff report noted several categories where changes could have been made: Big Actions (purchase or lease an electric vehicle; install solar panels), Energy Efficiency (adjust thermostat; weatherize or insulate home), Transportation (telecommute; carpool; take the bus), Water (take shorter showers; install efficient irrigation systems), Renter Friendly (wash clothes wisely; catch the rain), and Easy (up-

grade dishwasher; install low-flow toilets; turn off the faucet).

Within less than one year, 296 households have registered in the Moraga Challenge, and between Dec. 14, 2020, to Oct. 4, 2021, a combined total of 173 tons of CO2 (equivalent) emissions have been reduced.

Not stopping there, reports show 4,017 therms (natural gas) saved, along with 61,398 kWh of electricity saved. Nearly 375,000 gallons of water have been saved, as well as 4,244 gallons of gasoline. Perhaps the most significant and inspiring figure is the cash savings of \$71,240.

**To join the Sustainable Moraga Challenge visit:
<https://cleanercontracosta.org/moraga>.**

The clock is ticking to appoint a new Moraga council member

... continued from Page A1

With the topic of land use high on the list of town council discussions for the upcoming

year, the importance of someone with planning commission experience pre-empted the first motion to appoint Hillis as a council member by Onoda

and seconded by Sos. The motion failed with a 2-2 vote. Sos then made a motion to appoint Makker, to which there was no second.

"Can I just ask what we're doing here?" questioned Sos. "We have two qualified candidates, and we just had a vote on each of them, and you said 'no' to both of them, so I don't understand what we're doing here."

McCluer reiterated that he felt both candidates hadn't been residents long enough. However, Sos pointed out that they all started out green to the job. "To measure people up, people who are assuming office for the first time, to a seasoned council member, I don't believe is the appropriate way to be looking at this."

Woehleke felt that the town council has not been supportive of staff, and that there has been a lack of cooperation with regards to decision making, especially when he raises an issue. He mentioned that McCluer tried to organize a meeting to discuss the issues, but that it was re-

jected. He was also concerned about the possibility of three council members out-weighting the other two on a regular basis.

Onoda pointed out the urgency of making a decision that evening in order to avoid a potential special election (in May or June), after which Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg stated the cost to Moraga could be anywhere between \$93,104 and \$162,932.

"I'm very concerned that whoever we choose has to be a good team member," replied Woehleke. "We have to work together as a group of five."

McCluer agreed, saying that if the application process is opened up again, possibly more applicants will come forward. "Ideally a broad-based business person with a government background that's been in Moraga for a while."

Making another attempt at appointment, Onoda motioned for Makker with Sos seconding. Once again, McCluer and Woehleke voted against.

A clearly upset Onoda suggested that McCluer and Woehleke get together to discuss the issue in order to avoid more work for staff. "If you guys are this tender about it, it needs to be taken care of, and I don't think it has anything to do with the people who are trying to be on the council. If you two would swallow whatever rancid thing that you have in your mouth from the past, and we make this decision tonight and get this done, then we have meetings - the four of us - and get this taken care of!"

The decision was made to continue the process to the next day's regular town council meeting in the hopes that "sleeping on it" might change some minds.

On Oct. 13, Onoda immediately cut to the chase and moved to appoint Hillis to the council with Sos seconding the motion. Yet again, the vote ended in 2-2.

Sos addressed the concern about a "new to the town" member, suggesting that a mentorship from the others could be helpful, to which Woehleke replied that canvassing for a new set of applicants "may provide better clarity. I personally think we owe it to the residents since there are questions to open it back up again, and we'll be no worse off."

"This isn't going to sound very nice, so I'm warning you guys ahead of time," stated Onoda. "If we have to go to a Special Election, it is on the vice

mayor and the mayor, because Council Member Sos and I have both said okay to two candidates that are very qualified, so I just want it to be very clear that that's what I'm thinking, and it is completely 100% on you two, and that will cost \$100,000, perhaps, and I don't think this town wants to spend money doing that when they have elected us to make decisions. That is our job. As ugly as my statements just were, I stand by them." With that being said, she once again motioned to appoint Makker to town council and was seconded by Sos. The vote again was 2-2.

"When you say it's on us, it sounds like you're saying it's our fault," challenged McCluer. "It sounds like you're saying your opinion is right and our opinion is wrong. When you have a 2-2 vote, you have a difference of opinion." He once again suggested reopening the application process as a benefit to the residents.

Sos felt that opening another round of applications was disrespectful to the candidates who initially responded in a timely manner for the Sept. 30 deadline. Posing the idea that McCluer and Woehleke needed more time to reconsider Hillis and Makker she motioned that the entire matter be continued to the Oct. 27 Regular Town Council Meeting. Seconded by Onoda, the vote failed 2-2.

McCluer motioned to open the application process up to another round with Woehleke seconding. This time Onoda and Sos voted against.

Battenberg stated that the issue would be agendized again for the Oct. 27 Town Council Meeting, as it is the last regular meeting before the 60 day period of appointment expires on Nov. 8.

The town received 32 public letters of concern about this topic as of Oct. 22. An Oct. 17 letter addressed to the mayor and council members pointed out that "the refusal of half the Council to make a selection risks forcing the Town into an eight-month period with only a four-member Council - and the inability to break tie votes." The letter was signed by 13 former Moraga mayors and council members whose term in office ranged from 1974-2020. It went on to urge them to "set aside internal disputes, swiftly appoint one of the applicants before you, and return your attention to executing the urgent business of the Town."

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Town Council
 Wednesday, Oct. 27, 6:30 p.m.
Planning Commission:
 Tuesday, Nov. 2, 6:30 p.m.
Park and Recreation Commission:
 Monday, Nov. 15, 7 p.m.
Moraga School District Board Meetings:
 Tuesday, Nov. 9, 6 p.m.
 www.moraga.k12.ca.us