



EXPERIENCE MATTERS

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Community views remodeled Hacienda at recent Open House



Photos Vera Kochan

Remodeled Secondary Dressing Suite

By Vera Kochan

Ever since Wedgewood Weddings assumed event management at the Hacienda de las Flores, located at 2100 Donald Drive in Moraga, the facility had been abuzz (literally) with the sound of saws and hammers. The six-month, interior renovation was culminated with a May 12 Open House for the community.

The house chef created fancy appetizers for the occasion and a new signature cocktail called The Hacienda (tequila, lime juice, grapefruit juice and elderflower juice) was introduced.

Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt and Recreation Supervisor Jasmine Bateson were on hand to give guided tours of the on-site improvements which included

the ADA patio expansion, kitchen remodel, refurbishment of the Fireside Room and eventual gas fireplace, remodeled Secondary Dressing Suite, and repainted meeting rooms. That was just the first floor.

The second floor was turned into offices for the Wedgewood staff event planners, and the crown jewel on the third floor was an extensive makeover of the Primary Dressing Suite complete with a raised pedestal surrounded by full-length mirrors, a full bathroom, wet bar, couches and chairs offering a marvelous view of the Hacienda's patio (lit with twinkle, drip and bistro lights) and lawns below. The Pavilion area saw the dilapidated lawn replaced with artificial turf and a cement center aisle.

Wedgewood's Regional Manager Jerome Cansino, who

oversees 10 of their properties replied, "We're here to co-exist with the people in the neighborhood." To that extent the premises are allowed a 75-decibel noise level, but Wedgewood plans on keeping it at 55.

General Manager Alissa Mendoza oversees the entire staff including the caterers, bartenders, and event coordinators to ensure that things go smoothly. "I make sure that the couple of the day are in wedded bliss."

A bonus to the evening was a poetry reading on the Pavilion grounds by Matthew Zapruder, award-winning author of "Why Poetry." Zapruder is also a Saint Mary's College professor, a Guggenheim Fellow and former editor of the New York Times Magazine's poetry page.

Fire Abatement begins

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The Hacienda de las Flores has four structures (three parcels): Hacienda Building, La Sala Building, Casita Building and the Pavilion Building which are all subject to defensible space standards. A major drawback on the property is the hillside-covered Eucalyptus grove. In 2020, six trees were removed with the closest proximity to private structures in order to widen the fuel break.

Moraga Commons Park (two parcels) has a lawn that is regularly mowed, but the right-of-way land that runs from Moraga Road along St. Mary's Road toward Carter Drive is considered an evacuation route that must be kept clear.

Rancho Laguna Park (one parcel) has a combination of maintained lawn and natural areas that need fire abatement.

Of the eight town-owned undeveloped parcels, the largest is Mulholland Open Space Preserve (three parcels). With 250 acres it is the town's biggest fire abatement challenge in that a large portion of the area maintains its natural state

The Moraga Road Right-of-Way (one parcel) is located across from the Moraga Commons Park and is adjacent to West Commons Park. This area requires annual discing work.

West Commons Park (one parcel) is a new parcel to the town and will need to be monitored to decide what type of future abatement will be necessary.

Vacant Lots (three parcels) located at the intersection of Rheem Boulevard and St. Mary's Road fall under the full abatement category.

The town does perform in-house fire abatement work of weeds through flail mowing, trimming/edging, and medians (treatment after weed removal). Fuel reduction abatement involves limbing-up trees, shrub and brush re-

moval, and chipper use. Outside contractors are hired to weed abate large areas and perform fuel reduction through tree removal, complex and specialized fuel reduction, limbing-up trees, and hand crews to work steep hillsides.

Based on the results of staff's fire abatement study and recommendations, the council, minus Member Sona Makker who was absent that evening, agreed that the town continues to collaborate with MOFD regarding prescribed burns, expanded use of burn piles and expanded use of their Chipper Program.

Council also agreed to the continued use of cattle grazing on Mulholland, with the possibility of expanding the practice to other town parcels; continue to leverage available grant funding for fire abatement work; increase the FY 2022-23 budget for fire abatement to \$109,000 and plan for additional annual expenses of \$94,000 with regards to Mulholland; and use a hand crew to establish and maintain Mulholland's perimeter fuel breaks over a three-year period from 2021-22 to 2024-25 with fuel modification through MOFD.

The town council was asked to "consider purchasing a Kubota skid-steer loader with a forestry package and the following attachments: battle axe mulcher attachment and a 30 series root grapple, or comparable. The \$119,547 cost of purchasing the skid-steer loader could be funded with Fund 100 - Palos Colorados." There was discussion as to whether Moraga, Orinda and MOFD could share the purchase cost; or if Moraga made the purchase the other two could rent the equipment. However, given the short window of time involved for fire abatement and the amount of terrain involved among the three parties, someone might get the short end of the usage

stick when all is said and done. The topic will most likely come up for discussion at a future date.

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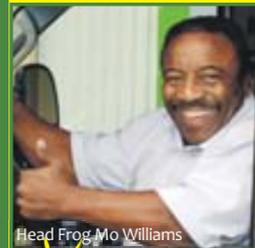


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