



EXPERIENCE MATTERS

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Hacienda Nights
Tuesday June 21
5pm-9pm

moragarec.com



St. Mary's Road roundabouts project goes back on the shelf



Image provided

Rendition of proposed St. Mary's Road roundabouts

By Vera Kochan

The project first took shape in 2007, when the town began analysis work in order to provide traffic relief and safety improvements for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists at two intersections along St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard and St. Mary's Road/Bollinger Canyon Road in Moraga, near the Lafayette border.

According to a staff report by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp and Associate Civil Engineer Mark Summers for a May 25 town council presen-

tation, in 2008, civil engineering firm Fehr & Peers came up with seven possible improvement scenarios to the intersections in question: 1) Left-turn pockets on St. Mary's Road to Rheem Boulevard and Bollinger Canyon Road; 2) All-way stop at St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard intersection; 3) All-way stop at St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard and St. Mary's Road/Bollinger Canyon Road intersections; 4) Roundabout at St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard intersection; 5) Roundabout at St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard intersection, and an all-way

stop at St. Mary's Road/Bollinger Canyon Road intersections; 6) Traffic signal at St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard intersection; and 7) Realignment of Bollinger Canyon Road to the intersection of St. Mary's Road at Rheem Boulevard.

Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) provided \$464,000 in funding through the Measure J Major Streets Program in 2016, in order to complete a preliminary design; and later that year, the town council appropriated \$140,707 from the Lamorinda Fee and Finance Authority (LFFA) in order to award a \$590,707 contract to engineering consultants Kimley-Horn and Associates. Their services were used to complete the 35% design and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental documentation from CCTA's funding agreement.

The town held two community informational meetings. The first was held July 2017, from which valuable information was gathered through public comment cards. The second meeting was held Sept. 27, 2018. Its purpose was to answer many of the questions and concerns

from the comment cards filled out by attendees from the prior meeting.

The largest concerns the project team received were geared toward safety, the various configurations in question, and financing the project. Another alternative emerged in the form of adding a large roundabout at St. Mary's/Rheem with a mini-roundabout at St. Mary's/Bollinger. This scenario showed a marked savings in safety cost, reduction of time spent waiting at intersections, reduction in operation and maintenance cost and a slight decrease in emissions. While the initial capital cost was slightly higher than other alternatives, the accumulated costs compared to all the of proposed alternatives was substantially lower over time. As such, Kimley-Horn has completed a 35% preliminary design of this roundabout with probable construction costs in 2022 at an estimated \$7,361,000. If the town is interested in seeking future funding from outside sources in order to complete the engineering design and construction it could look to CCTA for various possibilities.

During the town council

meeting, public comments ranged from those in favor of the roundabouts to those who wanted the status quo. Council members discussed the idea of stop signs with cost savings in mind and the big "what if." What if the town went to the trouble of installing roundabouts, and they didn't work? There was also some concern about dragging the project out even longer without coming to a final conclusion.

Knapp reminded the council that the purpose of the presentation was simply to approve the Initial Study and Mitigation Negative Declaration, and to appropriate \$37,000 from Fund 799 – LFFA (Fiscal Year 2021-22) into FY 2022-23 to pay the final engineering costs and close out the project at the 35% Conceptual Study and Plans level. Staff was able to reduce expenditures by approximately \$70,000 and return it to the LFFA regional traffic impact fund for other town priorities. While the council unanimously approved the resolution, they chose not to budget \$50,000 to pursue grant funding next year.

Honey harvest demonstration attracted anyone who might 'bee' curious



A completed full frame of capped honey

By Vera Kochan

A unique learning experience in the form of a honey harvest was presented to local residents by Lamorinda Bees who teamed up with Mount Diablo Beekeepers Association to give folks a bee-to-honey demonstration during the June 4 event.

Held in the Community Room of the Moraga Library, the curious of all ages came to marvel at the various stages a honey making process goes through before the final product makes its way into jars.

A honey bee trivia board explained some interesting facts: Honey bees have five eyes (two large compound eyes and three small simple eyes); Honey bee queens lay approximately 1,500 eggs a day (in peak season); A single bee makes 1/12 teaspoon of honey in its entire lifetime (a typical 12-ounce bottle of honey needs 864 bees to produce its contents); Bees flap their wings 190 times a second; A honey bee flies 15 miles per hour; Honey bees keep the inside of their hives at 93 degrees Fahrenheit (if it's cold outside, all of the bees vibrate their bodies to create heat to warm up the hive, and when it's hot outside, they

flap their wings like fans to create a breeze); Honey bees never sleep; Honey bees are the only insect that produces food for human consumption; and Honey bees pollinate approximately 80% of all vegetables, fruit and seed crops in the United States.

MDBA President Jan Pinkerton Spieth brought wooden frames (approximately 1-foot by 2-feet) containing hives loaded with worker bees milling around, busily laboring to create honey under the watchful eye of their queen. "It can take a week or two to fill a frame," she explained.

According to Spieth, the wax that forms the hexagonal receptacles/pockets containing the honey is produced inside a bee's body and the receptacles are also used to contain the growing larvae from eggs laid by the queen (whose life span is typically 2-3 years). It takes 21 days for a worker bee to hatch and maintain a lifespan of 5-6 weeks.

Lamorinda Bees were represented by Rosalind Bassett, her son Rhys Pullen (a San Diego State University student), daughter Sloan Pullen (a Campolindo High School student) and husband Mark Pullen. Rhys and Sloan



"Scraping" the wax caps to expose the honey

were introduced to the world of beekeeping while in the 4H Lamorinda chapter when they were 11 and 9 years old, and the family became hooked. Today they maintain three hives at home and two in The Bluffs and estimate that they are responsible for approximately 95,000 bees.

Bassett explained that a smoker is used when a beekeeper wants to calm the bees before opening the hive. "It can mimic a real fire causing the bees to gorge on the existing honey in case the 'fire' will destroy everything including their source of food." This makes it difficult for them to sting. "The smoke also masks a bee's alarm pheromone helping them to remain calm."

Sloan demonstrated the "scraping" process of harvesting honey, whereby a heated metal "scraper" is used to remove the wax off the tops of the cells (also called uncapping). Any excess wax collected by this procedure is turned into blocks and used to make beeswax candles.

The frames with the uncapped cells were handed to Rhys and placed into an "extractor" which rapidly spun the frames for about 10-15 minutes in order to release the honey from the cells

through centrifugal force. The honey was collected at the bottom of the extractor and released from a spigot onto a filter before placing into jars for sale.

Bassett encourages any



Photos Vera Kochan

Placing the "scraped" frames into the extractor

interested local high school students to join Lamorinda Bees by emailing her at: rbassett@mvpctoday.org. Spieth can be reached through www.diablobees.org or by calling (925) 330-7032.



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