



MORAGA

See public meetings schedule on these pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:
www.moraga.ca.us
Phone: (925) 888-7022
Chamber of Commerce:
www.moragachamber.org
Moraga Citizens' Network:
www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

Town Council

Wed., Jan. 24, 6:30 p.m.
Wed., Feb. 14, 6:30 p.m.
Planning Commission:
Tuesday, Feb. 6, 6:30 p.m.
Park and Recreation Commission:
TBA

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- Carpets
- Rugs
- LVP
- Vinyl
- Laminate

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Local businesses continue to struggle post-pandemic

By Vera Kochan



Photo Vera Kochan

Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe closed on Dec. 31 after over 30 years in business.

Many local businesses began to experience a decline in foot traffic when the pandemic first struck the U.S. in 2020, which is understandable and obvious. However, much of the shopping public has gotten used to making purchases online, causing a stagnation in recovery for local retail.

Case in point, Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe, a staple in town for over 30 years, closed its doors for good on Dec. 31. According to Moraga Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Katie Bidstrup, "We're all busy in our lives, but shopping local is important. The Cham-

ber is trying to remind residents how important it is. The convenience of having things delivered to your door is wonderful, but it's not helping locals."

Bidstrup spoke with several of Moraga's business owners asking them what they'd like residents to know about their post-COVID comeback and the struggles they still face. Moraga Cleaners Owner/Operator Debra Le said that up to 60% of her business has returned from COVID. People are going back to work, but they are dressing more casually which often doesn't require dry

cleaning. There was an uptick in business during the holidays, because more people were willing to go to parties that required "dressing up." Le wants people to think about using Moraga Cleaners for their household needs such as sleeping bags, bedding or curtains. She has no idea what the next 2 to 5 years will bring, but regrettably she will have to raise her prices to make up for the loss in patronage.

Not having any pre-COVID experience in town, the owner of Jang Acupuncture, Andrea Jang, took a daring leap of faith in 2020 by opening her Moraga business in the middle of the pandemic. Once she was able to safely treat her clientele, "people thanked me for being here locally. Acupuncture has never been better in Moraga. People seem so grateful to have wellness service in town, because they used to commute [to] other locations." In fact, her personal success story has encouraged Jang to open Higher Ground Wellness Center with a scheduled grand opening on Jan. 18

in Moraga.

The owner of an auto repair shop in town told Bidstrup that "revenues are about the same, but the net is not. There's only so much you can pass on to the consumers when your stock's prices have risen, and in order to retain your staff you have to deal with payroll increases." He mentioned knowing that several businesses have had to shorten their hours, because they are short-staffed.

According to Bidstrup, many of the town's restaurants continue to struggle, and anyone who does the family grocery shopping will attest that food prices have skyrocketed to unreasonable heights. Restaurants are loathe to raise their prices, but find themselves in a Catch-22 situation.

One business owner in Moraga expressed how difficult it is to hire and keep workers. Potential employees come to town in the middle of the day for an interview and assume that traffic is basically non-existent. These workers typically come from outside the town

limits and are shocked when they are stuck in rush hour congestion trying to get to the freeway. Even though they love the town, the length of time spent in traffic, especially the Moraga through Lafayette corridor, is a game-changer.

Some retailers have difficulty keeping employees aged 18 and older, so in order to stay in business have begun hiring 16-year-olds (which is legal, depending on the task). "There are always new laws that consumers never hear about, but affect how a business operates in the form of expenses," stated Bidstrup. She cited the new Paid Sick Leave law which, as of Jan. 1, requires that employers must generally provide 5 days or 40 hours of sick leave per year to their employees in California.

Bidstrup wants to remind shoppers to think outside the box "if you want something done by one of our businesses that's out of the norm; just ask them. You'd be surprised at what additional services they can offer that you're not aware of."

Authentic Mexican taqueria comes to Rheem

By Vera Kochan

The new La Chamba Taqueria, located at 484 Center Street in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center of Moraga, doesn't just bill itself as "authentic Mexican cuisine" without backing up the claim. All of the recipes were handed down to owner Ben Rojas from his Mexican-born mom.

Rojas, his wife Kelly and kids Sam (11) and Lily (9), moved to Moraga in 2018 from San Francisco. He had a dream of opening "a no fuss place for people to get a good meal." And, recalling the laid-back taquerias in Mexico, "I wanted to

bring this type of food to Moraga using authentic recipes that came from my family. I'm big on food and wine, and I wanted to try something that would connect me to my culture."

As a young woman, Rojas' mother had every intention of becoming a nun in the Catholic church. The order she belonged to expected their novices to develop a skill that would be useful within their convent. She was put through a culinary program just before she was to take her vows, and while on a contemplative break, decided to leave the order and get married. Sadly, both of Rojas' parents died in their 30s, but her creative recipes are lovingly kept by his brother in a large folder.

Rojas, in real estate by trade, admits to being a good cook, but leaves those duties to his restaurant staff. His son wants to work at La Chamba as soon as he's legally allowed. "You

should never work in the restaurant business unless you want to provide something special for the community," he stated. "And it's important for the community to support local business."

The restaurant's name, "La Chamba," is slang for "the job" or "work," but Rojas explained that when you find a job and the experience becomes good, it becomes your passion. "It's your gig. It's what you do. That's your jam."

Their website states: "We want our customers to feel like they are part of our family when they dine with us. That's why we've created a warm and inviting atmosphere that is perfect for family dinners, date nights and everything in between."

La Chamba's décor includes bright white and soft blue walls, chrome countertops, and red chairs that complement the 1930/40s-era antique taqueria tables from Mexico. Customers



La Chamba Taqueria's cheerful interior Photo Vera Kochan

can watch the finishing touches being applied to their orders through the glass preparation counter. "It's kind of like dinner theatre," joked Rojas, before proudly stating, "Everything [the salsas, guacamole, handmade tortillas, etc.] is made fresh in the morning."

The eatery's No. 1 seller is the carne asada, with Baja fish and pollo asado coming in second and third respectively. Also on the menu are tacos, burritos, nachos, flautas, ensaladas, quesadillas and birria Jalisco-style (a meat

stew). They've already had positive feedback that their food tastes like authentic taqueria fare. Mexican sodas, draft beer, and wine by the glass are also available. Shrimp has recently been added to the menu, and there are vegetarian options with no added animal fats.

La Chamba Taqueria is open Monday through Saturday from noon to 8 p.m. Closed on Sundays. They also cater. For more information visit their website: LaChambaTaqueria.com or call (925) 592-0964.

Public Safety

Emergency response:
Emergency: 24 Hours 911
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours
925-284-5010
Nixle: Text your zip code to 888777 or www.nixle.com
Lafayette Police Department:
3471 Mt. Diablo Blvd.
925-283-3680
Chief of Police, Ben Alldritt
925-299-3221
Police Department Tip Line
94549Tip@gmail.com
Police Department Traffic Issues
94549Traffic@gmail.com
Moraga Police Department:
329 Rheem Blvd., 925-888-7055
Chief of Police, Jon King ext. 7049
Orinda Police Department:
22 Orinda Way 925-254-6820
Chief of Police, Ryan Sullivan
925-254-6820
Orindatip@cityoforinda.org

Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 24 - Jan. 6



Alarms	47
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	18
Traffic	69
Suspicious Circumstances	8
Suspicious Subject	11
Suspicious Vehicle	8
Service to Citizen	14
Patrol Req./Security Check	4
Public/School Assembly Check	0
Supplemental Report	9
Vacation House Check	55
Welfare Check	8
Ordinance Violation	1
Vehicle violations	
Auto Burglary	
1100 Block Loveland Dr.	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	
3300 Block Springhill Rd.	
Reckless Driving	
Glenside Dr./St Marys Rd.	
Reliez Station Rd./Richelle Ct.	
Moraga Rd./Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Tc - Property Damage	
Reliez Station Rd./Glenside Dr.	
Mt. Diablo Blvd./Golden Gate Way	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Acalanes Ave.	
Moraga Rd./School St.	
Vehicle Theft	
200 Block Lafayette Cir.	
Other criminal activity	
Fraud False Pretenses	
1100 Block Estates Dr. (2)	
Identity Theft	
Police Department	
900 Block Acalanes Rd.	
Panhandling	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Bl A	

Petty Theft	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
700 Block Old Jonas Hill Rd.	
1800 Block Reliez Valley Rd.	
Shoplift	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (5)	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Nuisance to the Community	
Disturbing The Peace	
El Curtola Blvd./Camino Diablo	
Loud Noise	
1800 Block Reliez Valley Rd.	
3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
Loud Party	
3300 Block Sweet Dr.	
Public Nuisance	
El Curtola Blvd./Eb Sr 24 (2)	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)	
3700 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
50 Block Lafayette Cir.	
Vandalism	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
10 Block Hidden Valley Rd.	
Other	
Checks Non Suff Funds	
3500 Block School St.	
Trespass	
3100 Block Cordova Way	
Unwanted Guest	
Pleasant Hill Rd./Stanley Blvd.	
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.	

Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 26 - Jan. 1



Alarms	6
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	3
Traffic	43
Suspicious Circumstances	1
Suspicious Subject	2
Suspicious Vehicle	1
Service to Citizen	24
Patrol Req./Security Check	28
Public/School Assembly Check	8
Supplemental Report	13
Vacation House Check	0
Welfare Check	1
Ordinance Violation	0
Vehicle violations	
Excessive Speed	
Moraga Way/Ivy Dr. (2)	
Tc - Minor Injuries	
Moraga Rd./Rheem Blvd.	
400 Block Moraga Rd.	
Other criminal activity	
Embezzlement	Homegoods
Grand Theft	Safeway
Nuisance to the Community	
Disturbance-domestic	
700 Block Augusta Dr.	
Disturbing The Peace	
Not Available	
Other	
Failure To Obey	Safeway

New Wildfire Mitigation Requirements in effect Jan. 1

Residents with juniper or bamboo on their property might soon find a door hanger from a Moraga-Orinda Fire District's Wildfire Mitigation Specialist noting that they are not in compliance with Ordinance 20-01, which MOFD's board of directors approved on July 15, 2020. The ordinance included a requirement that all juniper (genus juniperus) and bamboo (genus bambusa) within 10 feet of the paved edge of all public and private roads be removed by Dec. 31, 2023. If your property has juniper or bamboo that must be removed, the Fire District has several programs that may be of assistance:

Fuels Mitigation and Fire Prevention Programs (including home hardening grants) - www.mofd.org/Fire-Prevention
Request a no-cost home assessment - www.mofd.org/FAC-A
Chip and haul cut vegetation through the MOFD Wood Chipper Program - www.mofd.org/chipper-program
City of Orinda's Free wood chipping program https://reserve.chipperday.com/Orinda and the Measure R Fire
Fuels Reduction Incentive Program (may be available to Orinda residents) at: www.cognitofirms.com/CityOfOrinda/1-MeasureRFireFuelsReductionIncentivePilotProgramApplication

If you have questions about the new requirements, email info@mofd.org or contact MOFD fire prevention staff at (925) 258-4599. - J. Wake