



MORAGA

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Town council presents Community Goals for 2022

By Vera Kochan

With another new year comes another set of Town Council Community Goals, and 2022 is no exception. Mayor Renata Sos and Vice Mayor Steve Woehleke came together to devise a list of 14 goals and priorities, which upon discussion with the other council members (Teresa Onoda, Sona Makker and Mike McCluer) during its Jan. 26 meeting, required some tweaking and eventually grew to 16 goals.

The purpose of the annual goal-setting is to obtain input from the community and to help staff carve out a work agenda for the coming year, all while directing the town's resources toward high priority undertakings.

Many of the 2022 goals are a continuation of the prior year's efforts and may take a few years to accomplish, which is why they still remain on the list, in one form or another. Some examples are the 6th Cycle Housing Element and Bollinger Valley Study Area Rezone. The town created a Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative, updated the General Plan, completed an environmental review, rezone and more.

Also in 2021, a Five-Year Capital Improvement Program was adopted in order to better budget infrastructural needs and shortfalls allowing staff to seek grants for future projects. Included in the program are traffic safety projects, street repairs, and storm drain issues.

Even though the bulk of the Canyon Road Bridge Project has been completed, aesthetic touches such as lighting and landscaping are still in the works. The East Bay Municipal Utility District's landslide project near the bridge has completed Phase I, with Phase II on track for a 2022 completion along with the restoration of the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail.

Financially, 2021 saw an improvement to Moraga's cof-

fers thanks to a \$4.2 million grant fund from the American Rescue Plan Act; a \$2.25 million payment from the Palos Col-orados developer; a Fiscal Year 2020-21 General Fund surplus which pushed the Reserve to \$500,000 above the 50% General Fund Reserve policy; and a potential \$200,000 reduction in the annual subsidy of the Hacienda de las Flores thanks to a 10-year lease agreement with Wedgewood Weddings.

The official title for this year's goals is "Moraga Town Council 2022 Goals and Priorities – For the Community, With the Community." Heading up the list is to efficiently sustain core operations and services of the town, maintain fiscal discipline, and continue to position the town for long-term fiscal sustainability and operational efficiency.

Also, continue updating, consistent with retaining the town's semi-rural character, the Moraga General Plan and the 6th Cycle Housing Element to satisfy the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), as well as implement corresponding rezoning (including the Bollinger Valley Special Study Area), objective standards, and revisions to the Planned Development Process.

Still in progress are several projects including completing work on the permanent Canyon Road Bridge and secure remaining reimbursements; completing the 2022 construction phase and the 2023 design of the "Worst First" Pavement Reconstruction Projects; and continuing implementation of the Storm Drain System Operations and Maintenance Program and undertaking needed storm drain capital improvements projects.

The council also needs to allocate the Moraga ARPA grant funding to the highest priority needs and implement corresponding plans; along with maintain and improve public safety with high-quality police and emergency response services and continue coordina-

tion with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District on fire safety, evacuation, and emergency preparedness and with the Moraga Schools on student well-being.

Additional goals include enhance the town's parks, open space, and facilities for the benefit of the public; with public input, develop and initiate a process for identifying and prioritizing uses for unrestricted and unassigned Palos Col-orados funds, including, among other things, consideration of a town-wide Recreation Open Space Plan; keep focus on traffic, congestion and pedestrian safety, particularly around schools, crosswalks and through routes.

More goals are to improve the town's communications with and outreach to the public using innovative approaches that are inclusive of all segments of the community and encourage public input and feedback; lessen the town's impact on the environment by continuing to implement sustainability initiatives and viable strategies in Moraga's Climate Action Plan; contribute further to the community effort to improve diversity and inclusion throughout the town, including but not limited to continuing to sponsor United Against Hate Week; and work collaboratively with the community, including the chamber, to improve Moraga's business climate.

The council also hopes to improve and enhance the collaboration and partnership with Saint Mary's College; and participate in a Moraga community service day working with community groups.

The town council did not vote on the goals as a whole, but rather gave their opinions and suggestions on each of them. A straw vote was taken to see which direction to take.

The entire item will be brought back on the next agenda for a formal vote at which time additional changes can still be made.

Moraga hires new Admin Services Director



New Administrative Services Director Annie To Photo Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

The town wasted no time in filling the barely vacant administrative services director position vacated by Norm Veloso. With almost a month under her belt, Annie To has hit the ground running in order to keep Moraga's day-to-day financial business up to speed.

Formerly the financial director for the city of Alameda, To has also held the deputy financial director position with

the city of San Jose and the finance director job for the city of Hercules. "I've not worked in the private industry – just local governments," she stated.

Her love of number crunching came before studying business administration and accounting at San Francisco State University. To also earned an MBA from JFK University when the campus was located in Orinda, and she has passed her CPA exams.

Some of To's duties for the town will include managing

the finances; overseeing the operation of Human Resources; working on the upcoming labor negotiations; and involvement in recruiting for the various vacated positions within the town offices. "Right now I am focusing on the mid-year budgets," she explained. "The next project is for labor negotiations. When we get fully staffed it will be a big help. I have managed 35 employees before. Here, the directors wear many hats and multi-task."

To currently lives in Oakland with her husband and children. When her two boys were young, she used to bring them to Moraga for private painting lessons. "I was so excited to get this job in Moraga. A small town is so nice. I used to live in Danville, and I love small towns."

Finding Moraga to be a great fit, To stated, "So far it's been good trying to get to know the executive staff and getting to know all of the aspects of the job. It's been very interesting. Every day has been exciting for me, and I'm trying to wrap my arms around the finances of the town."