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2016 Moraga Town Goals

By Sophie Braccini

Two community-proposed items rose to the top of the list of 2016 goals for the town of Moraga during the Jan. 21 council meeting: support the Rheem Theatre and implement a surveillance camera system in town.

Residents were invited to suggest their own priorities in preparation of the adoption of the 2016 goals, and the public engagement led to a lively debate. Items such as revisiting the dog park issue, or limiting development did not make the final list.

The meeting started with councilmembers disagreeing on the mayor's first goal to complete a community preference survey and develop a revenue measure for the 2016 ballot. Councilmember Teresa Onoda said the two elements were quite different and her colleagues agreed that surveying the residents was key and would lead to a decision of whether the town needed to look into new revenue sources.

Other ongoing or recurrent town goals such as maintaining sound financial practices, developing a funding strategy for the town's assets and infrastructure, developing plans for the Hacienda de las Flores, reopening discussions with the school district for new and shared community recreation facilities, completing the update of the hillside and ridgeline regulations, completing the Moraga Center Specific Plan zoning project were adopted with not much squabble.

William Carman, the chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission, defended the goal of improving interconnectedness and public awareness of Moraga's trail system.

Resident Richard Harris asked that adding sidewalks to pedestrian school routes be added to the goals. Planning Director Ellen Clark summarized the different studies such as the Livable Moraga Road Project and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan updates that are underway and should lead to grant seeking and sidewalk improvements in 2016.

At the Jan. 13 town council meeting, residents Christine Beckwith and Chuck Pruitt spoke passionately about safety cameras in town. Beckwith had witnessed burglars stealing mail from her neighbor's house, and got their car's license plate. She alerted the police and since then has been spearheading a local campaign to give the police the tools to keep residents safe. The residents met with Moraga Police Lt. Jon King, and Chief Bob Priebe, now interim town manager, confirmed that his department would soon come with a cost proposal for the council to make a decision. All agreed at the goal setting meeting to add the cameras to the list of objectives for 2016.

Vice-Mayor Trotter and Councilmember Roger Wykle backed a public suggestion to support building a long-term strategy for the Rheem Theatre. Their request was met by the mayor's skepticism, as he was not sure there is much the town could do. But Trotter insisted that the goal had both a symbolic and a practical aspect since the town started working with that property owner on a development agreement. All agreed to add the support of the local theater to the list of 2016 goals. Some residents had asked that a new off-leash dog rules be studied. Councilmembers remembered the considerable amount of time spent on the topic of a dog park from 2009 to 2012 and unanimously refused to add that goal to their 2016 list. Several residents had also asked that further limits be placed on development. Jill Keimach, who was sitting in the town manager's seat for the last time, said that the ridgeline and hillside development study should be completed first and that it may be enough to address this concern. No one decided to push that topic any further.

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