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Budget, road maintenance lead town goals for 2017

By *Sophie Braccini*

It took surprisingly little time for the Moraga Town Council to agree on its 2017 goals, once the topic of gun violence prevention had been taken out of the picture (see article page A5).

Town Manager Robert Priebe and his staff had prepared a summary of the discussion that started in January. At the time Mayor Theresa Onoda had proposed only four goals, then ongoing projects had been added, followed by a list of other goals that other council members were pushing.

Some unusual ideas for Moraga were proposed beyond the usual balanced budget, road and drain maintenance, and protection of the open space. The mayor wanted to put a priority on economic development, asking that the town work with the Moraga Chamber of Commerce to improve the permitting process for local businesses. That goal was unanimously approved, but the town manager warned that the likelihood of completion of this goal in 2017 was low.

Onoda had also listed as one of her goals the completion of successful bargaining agreements with all employees. Council members did approve that goal, but the town manager was not that optimistic about the potential for a positive outcome. He indicated that the town can only offer so much, and that it might not be enough to retain all valued employees, a recurrent problem for a small town with a reputation for frugality. Town staff members also stated their skepticism over the completion in 2017 of some of other goals. The continuation of the efforts to establish a private/public partnership to develop the Hacienda de las Flores was in that category, along with the completion of the design of new roundabouts on St. Mary's Road and the efforts to support the Rheem Theater. Council member David Trotter challenged this latter assumption and asked for a medium probability for successfully supporting the local icon.

On the other hand, town staff said they are feeling confident that the hillsides and ridgelines updated rules and the implementation process of the Moraga Center Specific Plan will be completed in 2017.

Fifteen goals were approved and four new goals were put on hold. Among these was a request by council member Kymberleigh Korpus, supported by Janette Fritzky, that metrics be introduced in the goal planning process to measure progress and success. Council member Trotter said that public policy could not be measured the same way business is, that processes such as amending planning rules are driven by their value, not by numbers.

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