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Moraga to study gun violence prevention

By Sophie Braccini

In the words of Moraga Mayor Teresa Onoda, the town chamber had never been so full and the list of people wanting to speak so long as on the evening of Feb. 8, when residents came to discuss the possibility for Moraga to adopt prevention of gun violence ordinances.

It was a passionate and emotionally charged debate, always courteous, with a majority of Moraga residents wanting to enforce local rules on zoning for gun outlets and mandatory locking mechanism. A majority of the council members decided that the topics should be studied, but it was not added to the long list of goals for 2017.

Over a dozen residents spoke for adding gun violence prevention rules to the Moraga code and many more supported the topic in the room.

Allison Anderman, the Moraga mom and attorney with the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence has been at the onset of this campaign and said supporters in Moraga were in the range of 200.

The arguments of these residents focused mostly on the need to have rules to safely store and lock guns in homes to prevent accidents with children. Most were parents of school-age children recounting incidents in the community and expressing the fear it could happen again here, as it did 25 years ago, when a teen was accidentally killed

by a classmate.

In its prepared list of goals staff had listed the topic of gun ordinances as potentially very costly. A local resident, in a very dramatic plea, argued that if the ordinance would save just one life, the effect would be immeasurable.

The group also advocated for a zoning ordinance similar to the one in place in Lafayette that does not permit guns trade in residential neighborhoods and near schools.

Four people, some from Moraga, spoke against adding more local rules when state laws already have provisions for gun safety, and dealers always provide a lock with a new gun. They recommended trusting the police officers in town.

A month ago when this topic was first discussed, Moraga Police Chief John King had taken a similar line, explaining that his professional opinion was that more education would more effective than rules that would be difficult to enforce.

Council member Kymberleigh Korpus was the only person on the dais to state an opposition to looking into the violence prevention ordinance. She indicated that staff time and town resources would be better spent elsewhere. The other four council members agreed to bring back the topic for an indepth study session, including legal aspects, at a later time.

Moraga Country Club

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Now Leslie Mortimer, the board's president, says that all is under control and she'd rather not share specifics with the public. She said the swim team committee is working very hard to have a successful season, hiring coaches, and moving forward.

Turmoil also affected the tennis team, with the departure of a popular coach, with all parties involved blaming each other.

The matter of the landslide that has forced two club's families out of their homes may also have contributed to a perception of opacity coming from the board. Mortimer, explains that the club is tangled in a lawsuit over the landslide responsibility and that open communication is therefore impossible, as recommended by the club's legal counsel.

An example of the difficulty

in sorting out the situation is exemplified by what is happening with the club members whose homes have been red-tagged, but still find themselves having to pay Home Owner Association dues. The board declined to suspend their obligation to pay their dues, but on the other hand the general manager says that a Go-Fund-Me account was started to support these families.

Mortimer insisted that the issues affecting the club were private and should not be reported publicly. She added that in her opinion a few disgruntled people were using social media to spread inaccuracies. Her three-year term on the board will end next year.

The ballots for the election have already been given to voters and have to be returned to the MCC before March 20.

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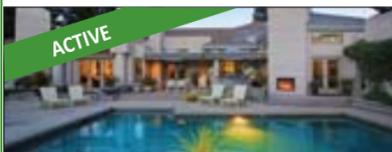


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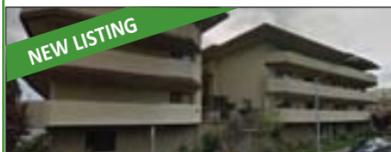
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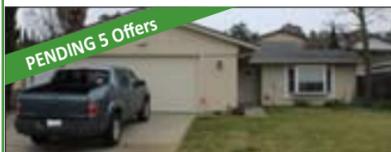
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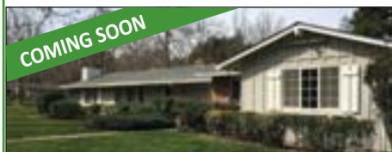
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