



Moraga

Public Meetings

City Council

Wednesday, July 12, 7 p.m.
 Wednesday, July 26, 7 p.m.
 Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, July 17, 7 p.m.
 Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, July 24, 7 p.m.
 Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

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

Moraga Police Report



June 20 to 27

Alarms	21
Noise complaints	1
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	2
Traffic stops	36
Suspicious Circumstances	11
Suspicious Subjects	2
Suspicious Vehicles	1
Barking Dog	
1900 block Ascot Dr.	
Battery	
100 block Corliss Dr.	
Child molest	
300 block Rheem Blvd.	
Disturbance	
10 block via Barcelona	
70 block Donald Dr.	
10 block Doral Dr.	
500 block Center St.	
500 block Moraga Rd.	
Dispute	
Moraga Commons Park	
Location n/a	
DUI	
800 block Villa Ln.	
Excessive speed	
Brandt Dr/Harrington Rd.	

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Moraga declares fiscal emergency with thin budget

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga Administrative Director Amy Cunningham asked the Moraga Town Council to declare a fiscal emergency for the town.

This does not mean that the city is bankrupt, but that the recent emergencies and ongoing state of minimal resources have stretched the town's budget too thin. The declaration will, according to staff, allow the town to more easily pursue new avenues for more sustainable and locally controlled income sources.

The two infrastructure incidents that have plagued Moraga last year and this year — the sinkhole and the failing Canyon bridge — have tapped Moraga's reserves,

leaving the town's coffers almost drained and the administration unable to face its obligations should a new incident occur, Cunningham said. But this is not all. The director pointed out to the council that the town has been underfunded from the start and that it resulted in years of deferred maintenance, and a lack of asset replacement funding.

Cunningham and Town Manager Bob Priebe agree that declaring the emergency sends a message to the community and to agencies the town is dealing with: Moraga has a problem that will not go away on its own.

When she made her budget presentation to the town council on June 28 Cunningham showed a balanced operational budget but with no surplus to be directed to the depleted asset replacement fund and the reserves. Cunningham warned that in the future, even operational expenses might not be covered by revenue, as requirements increase and revenue does not.

The director highlighted the fact that previous studies have shown that Moraga does not have a spending problem, but a resource problem. The per capita expenditure for public services is the lowest in the area: Moraga spends \$481, when Lafayette spends \$673, Orinda \$732, Danville \$704, Clay-

ton \$888, and San Ramon \$1,004.

One of the reasons Moraga is so poor is because it gets the lowest percentage in Contra Costa County of the property tax paid in town: only 5.32 percent, a figure that was negotiated by Moraga's founders at incorporation and that was frozen in perpetuity when Proposition 13 passed. Cunningham explained after the meeting that no one was willing to challenge this discrepancy, because according to the director, giving more to Moraga would mean giving less to another community.

At this time, Moraga's total reserve, including the developer's fee fund from Palos Colorados, is about \$2.3 million. The funds to provide an emergency bridge on Canyon Road have already been deducted. These funds, or at least a portion, as well as those going to the repair of the sinkhole near Rheem Boulevard, should come back to the town in the future. Cunningham was sure to note that federal processes are very long and that reimbursement is always at the discretion of the administration.

Seth Frieman was the only Moraga resident who came to the meeting to comment about this topic. According to his calculation, Moraga needs to find \$55 million of additional resources to compen-

sate for the years of delayed maintenance and asset replacement. He noted that if the town decides to go for a parcel tax it would have to be in the \$1,200 to \$1,500 per parcel range to make a dent.

Cunningham said that staff will be looking at all possible options. The first step will be a new public survey to assess what people want to preserve as far as public services. It will happen by the end of July. Then different funding mechanisms will be studied.

The council unanimously approved the budget and the declaration of fiscal emergency. Council member Kymberleigh Korpus asked if such a declaration would hurt Moraga's credit rating. Priebe answered that the town's financial situation would dictate what its rating would be, and that it was not good.

Heads up for a new survey

Residents will be asked in the coming weeks to participate in a survey that will gauge their priorities regarding town services. The survey will be done through a mixed use of phone calls, texting and online questionnaires.

Sinkhole repair

Moraga Public Works department said that the repair work for the sinkhole is planned to start on July 17 and last until Oct. 7. The town will close Rheem Boulevard at the intersection with Moraga Road for the entire duration of the repairs.— Sophie Braccini

Moraga Town Council postpones local Poet Laureate decision

By Sophie Braccini

The members of the Moraga Town Council could not decide if a local poet laureate should be a shared Lamorinda resource or uniquely Moraga's.

Two projects are competing for local approval: a concept where Moraga and Saint Mary's College would collaborate to appoint an unpaid poet who would produce poetry and programs for the town, and the Lamorinda Arts Council's program that will appoint and fund a multi-cities poet that will create poetry for events and run literacy programs. The four council members present at a recent meeting could not find a majority for either option and the topic was continued to a future date.

Mayor Teresa Onoda proposes a Moraga-only poet laureate's program run by the parks and recreation department in collaboration with SMC. The idea started germinating in 2015 when Onoda and other art-minded Lamorinda people met with the Orinda Arts Council that had decided, under the leadership of Maestro Lawrence Kohl, to embrace the three communities. At the time, the idea was to combine the creativity and energy of the three communities, including SMC and local schools.

LAC's project is to appoint a laureate who will work with the three towns, or only two if Moraga does not want to join in. The non-profit has raised money to give that person a stipend. The laureate will be appointed for two years, write poetry to celebrate events and conduct training in schools. The pro-

gram does not require Moraga's financial participation.

The mayor is quite passionate about developing a unique program for Moraga. She explained at the June 28 meeting that this would contribute to making Moraga a fabulous place. She added that she has talked with SMC's president Jim Donahue countless times about this, that SMC is a powerhouse for poetry with the head of the creative writing department being the poetry editor for New York Times. She concluded that she did not want to exclude anyone, but that she was the mayor of Moraga, not of Lamorinda.

Council Member Dave Trotter argued that President Donahue had sent a letter to the council indicating that both options — a Moraga or a Lamorinda poet laureate — would be something the college would support. He said he favored the LAC's proposal because it was funded and already well defined. He wanted to make sure though that the poet could be someone working in Lamorinda and not necessarily living in Lamorinda as is indicated in the LAC's project. Vice-mayor Roger Wykle agreed.

Council member Kymberleigh Korpus, on the other hand, said that she could not support either program. She explained that she did not like in the LAC's project that the town would not have a decision-making responsibility in the choice of the poet, as that person was going to be writing about the town. She liked

that this project was a private one since she believes that the town should not spend time and money running it. She added that the

Moraga-only project had merits, but was not fully developed yet.

All agreed to postpone the decision to a later date. Kohl said after

the meeting that LAC, as requested by the Moraga council, will provide a new proposal taking into account its feedback and thoughts.

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