

Moraga moves toward regulating firearms storage

By Sophie Braccini

Few topics are as divisive and potentially explosive as firearms regulation in this country. The small town of Moraga decided nonetheless to look at regulating firearms storage and commerce within its borders. A recent town council meeting attracted many supporters and some opponents as the matter was discussed. Most residents spoke with calm and respect, a fine example of democratic debate, one council member noted.

The Aug. 23 Moraga Town Council meeting drew an overflowing crowd to the town chambers. Town clerk Marty McInturf counted 99 people in attendance, while hundreds more signed up online, watching the debates live. A majority of the people who came and spoke were parents of young children, a lot of them attending a council meeting for the first time. In their own words, it took an issue dear to their hearts to have them find the time to come to an evening meeting when they are already juggling so many activities.

Moraga Chief of Police Jon King framed the debate by saying he was convinced that all in atten-

dance had the same objective: the safety of the community. The difference, he said, was simply finding the best way to go about it.

Two possible ordinances were on the table that night: one to restrict where in town gun dealers could set up shop, and one to require gun owners to safely store their arms when not in their immediate control. The purpose of the evening was for the council to decide whether or not these two texts should be studied.

King's report did not favor adding both texts to the town's books. He explained that zoning the sale of firearms so dealers cannot set up shop in residential districts or near schools made sense, but he added that a safe storage ordinance was not a good idea. King said that such a text would be redundant since state law already punishes people whose easily accessible firearms cause accidents, especially when involving children. He added that if such a rule was in the municipal code, he did not see a way for his officers to enforce it.

King praised Allison Anderman, a Moraga resident and staff

attorney with the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, who brought this topic for the first time to the council and worked with other parents to prepare all the documentation regarding the potential ordinances.

Forty-six residents spoke in favor of drafting both ordinances. Many parents, school administrators, pediatricians and a church minister explained the same thing: safe storage ordinances prevent teen suicide, reduce the number of accidents involving firearms and children, and prevent theft of weapons.

Eight people, most of them Moraga residents, spoke against the safe storage ordinance. They explained it carried the risk of jeopardizing their safety by delaying access to their gun in case of an emergency, that it would cost money the town does not have, and like King said, existing law was enough and a municipal rule would not be enforceable. Most indicated that what was needed was to educate children.

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Manuel Valdez takes oath of office as Moraga postmaster



Manuel Valdez at the Moraga Post Office

Photo Andy Scheck

Manuel Valdez raised his right hand at 10:30 a.m. Sept. 1 and was sworn in as postmaster at the Moraga post office on Center Street. In doing so, he followed a proud tradition that dates back to 1886 when the first post office opened.

Valdez took the job in Moraga a few months ago and was immediately appreciated by the staff. Shelley Hayse who works in Moraga noted that his winning personality may come from the fact that he has actually worked in nine different facilities during his postal career, starting in Orinda where he carried the mail for 12 years before graduating from the Associate Supervisor Program that served as a springboard to his management career. He was the manager of the Fremont delivery unit in 2014 prior to his selection as the Moraga postmaster.

Hayse noted that Valdez has been open and accommodating, and willing to take the time to train everyone in new technologies that are quickly taking over the postal procedures. She says that his phi-

losophy is that the Moraga post office should be a facility with employees who actually look forward to coming to work.

Valdez' desire to create a positive working environment for his employees, adds Hayse, also translates to his attitude toward both the residential and business customers. "He is committed to providing solutions to problems and does not hesitate to go to extreme lengths to find answers to delivery questions," she says.

"It is a privilege to work for such a great and diverse organization," says Valdez. "When I first started working for the Postal Service, I never imagined that one day I would be a postmaster. It is truly a great honor."

As postmaster, Valdez is responsible for all delivery and retail operations for the town of Moraga with 14 routes, 872 P.O. boxes, and 5,868 delivery stops (business and residential addresses). Valdez manages 34 employees who process and deliver a daily mail volume of more than 30,985 pieces.

- S. Braccini

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<p>1202 Thomas Dr., Martinez</p> <p>Hillside custom home, almost 3300 sf, water views, private secluded lot. 5 bdr. 3 baths, hardwood flooring, a commercial kitchen, master suite retreat, spiral staircase to lower level, huge family room, and 2nd fireplace. Offered at \$800,000 by Rose Brudigan 925.765.6490. <i>For rent: 3654 B Chestnut St. Lafayette townhouse with 2 bed/1.5 bath for \$2895/mo.</i></p>	<p>811 Shady Glen, Martinez</p> <p style="color: green; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">PENDING</p> <p>This nicely upgraded home with views has 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, including a large Master Suite and 2065 sf. 1 bed & bath are conveniently found downstairs at street level. Also featured are a large deck and usable up sloped lot. Beautiful Alhambra Heights location, close to everything. Offered at \$750,000 by Regina Englehart, 925.876.9076.</p>	<p>58 Muth Drive, Orinda</p> <p style="color: green; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">SOLD</p> <p>Lovely contemporary style home with beautiful natural light, 3 bdr. and 2 full baths has 2000 sq.ft. of living space on .62 acres. Downstairs family room with wet bar. Its large deck with canopy trees is great for entertaining. Great schools, close to downtown Theater Square, BART & Highway 24. Sold for \$1,187,500 by Lisa Shaffer 925.528.9278.</p>	<p>712 Kearney Street, Benicia</p> <p style="color: green; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">SOLD</p> <p>Beautiful and spacious single-story home in the prestigious Water's End neighborhood offering 4 bedrooms plus den, 3 bathrooms, 3 car garage, and a huge private backyard. Wonderful location walking to schools and parks. Sold for \$800,000 by Sheri Wedlake, 925.324.2091.</p>	
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Meet our Featured Agents ...

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