



Moraga

Public Meetings

City Council

Wednesday, Jan. 10, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Jan. 16, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Jan. 22, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Moraga School District
Thursday, Feb. 13, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

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

Summary covers Dec. 26 to Jan. 1



- | | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Alarms | 11 |
| Traffic | 21 |
| Suspicious Circumstances | 4 |
| Suspicious Subject | 1 |
| Suspicious Vehicle | 4 |
| Service To Citizen | 13 |
| Patrol Request | 10 |
| 911 Hangup | |
| 20 Block Shuey Dr. | |
| Accident Properly | |
| Bank Of America | |
| Moraga Way/School St. | |
| Barking Dog | |
| 200 Block Scofield Dr. | |
| Civil | |
| Police Department | |
| Civil Standby | |
| Not Available | |
| Disturbing The Peace | |
| 10 Block Woodford Dr. | |
| Excessive Speed | |
| Moraga Rd./St. Marys Rd. | |
| Moraga Rd./Corliss Dr. | |
| Juvenile Disturbance | |
| Safeway | |
| Campolindo High School | |
| Library | |
| Loitering | |
| 500 Block Augusta Dr. | |
| Lost Property | |
| Police Department | |
| 300 Block Park St. | |
| Loud Party | |
| 10 Block Waterloo Pl. | |
| 10 Block Julianna Ct. | |
| Medical Hospital | |
| 300 Block Tharp Dr. | |
| Ordinance Violation | |
| 20 Block Sarah Ln. | |
| Petty Theft | |
| 100 Block Miramonte Dr. | |
| 600 Block Moraga Rd. | |
| Purse Shoplift | |
| 400 Block Center St. | |
| Public Assembly Check | |
| Rheem Valley Shopping Center (2) | |
| Campolindo High School | |
| Reckless Driving | |
| Campolindo High School | |
| Moraga Rd./Sky Hy Dr. | |
| Camino Ricardo/Moraga Way | |
| Supplemental Report | |
| Home Goods Moraga | |
| Home Goods Moraga | |
| 400 Block Center St. | |
| Bank Of America | |
| Traffic Hazard | |
| Rheem Blvd./Moraga Rd. | |
| Verbal Dispute | |
| 40 Block Cumberland Ln. | |
| Welfare Check | |
| St. Marys Rd./Stafford Dr. | |
| 100 Block Danefield Pl. (2) | |

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Interim town manager brings a wealth of experience to Moraga

By Sophie Braccini



Jim Holgersson in his new Moraga office. Photo Sophie Braccini

There must be something left of his adventurous Swedish ancestors in Jim Holgersson's blood to explain the many adventures he lived as manager of cities in many states. From Texas to Michigan, from Illinois to California, Holgersson has lived the highs and the lows, the excitements and the challenges of the profession, keeping intact in his heart a desire for social improvement and building communities. In Moraga, he should have a

few months to give the benefit of his years of experience to the town.

Holgersson started working in Moraga a month ago; although the office's doors were closed, he used the quiet time to get familiar with upcoming issues. He said a headhunter called him when he was on a cruise with his wife and he interviewed with the Moraga council via Skype. His first response had been "no," since he was enjoying retirement after leaving Modesto, his last city manager position, but he could not long resist the temptation of effecting change once again.

The interim manager says that he is a child of the '60s and as he was developing into adulthood there were many positive public figures that led him to believe that public service was the place to make a difference. He chose local government, where he felt that he could have a measurable impact.

Holgersson was raised by parents who emigrated from Sweden. The family history is intricate, with

grandparents coming to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, a father who went back to Sweden after the Great Depression, and a Swedish mother who left her country at age 17, after World War II, on a boat with one hope: that her fiancé would be on the dock when she arrived.

The manager's first government job was with the city of Davenport, Iowa. Early on, his personality and talent led him toward community building to address social challenges. He remembers how in San Jose, as deputy city manager, he was in charge of creating neighborhood associations that led public-private partnerships to address the population's needs in terms of safety, employment and housing. Holgersson does not believe that the government can solve everything, but that it can be a catalyst to energize partners. From Waco, Texas, to Germantown, Tennessee, or Kalamazoo, Michigan, Holgersson tackled some tough city issues,

moving on after five to eight years for a better opportunity or because of a change in elected officials.

Holgersson says that the job of the city manager is mostly outside of the office, meeting people. He has tackled much bigger problems than those in Moraga, and that gives him a calm perspective about the small California town.

Talking about the fiscal emergency that the town declared, he says that most cities grapple with similar issues and that a 50 percent reserve, such as what Moraga had, is an unattainable dream for most cities. The recommendation is 15 percent reserve, or about \$1.1 million for Moraga, something he believes is attainable. Holgersson would not comment about whether or not it had been a good idea to declare the financial emergency; the experienced manager is not someone to judge in haste and without the whole picture.

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Rheem Theatre

Derek Zemrak announced Jan. 3 that the Rheem Theatre would close on Jan. 7. He, with partner Leonard Pirkle and the large team of volunteers and employees, invested a wealth of imagination and passion to transform the old venue into a vibrant community gathering spot. But in the end, Zemrak said that it did not make sense to continue to personally sponsor the operations every month.

On Sunday night emotions ran high with final moviegoers. Resident Edy Schwartz, who has spent the last five years supporting the theater, sent a message to all her friends thanking Zemrak and Pirkle for putting their hearts and souls into the Rheem for the past eight years. Citizen of the Year Bobbie Preston summarized the general mood when she said that the closure was a huge blow to the community. Tom Frainier, CEO of Semifreddi's Bakery and huge supporter of the Rheem felt sad at losing Moraga's sole entertainment venue. And Paul James, a longtime Moraga resident, could not believe that the theater was closing and told Zemrak that he would participate in a citizen-led effort to salvage the venue.

The theater will stay intact for now, with all its equipment, but it is closed for the foreseeable future. Tom Schnurr, president of the Moraga Community Foundation, said that the board was sad to hear that the Rheem Theatre was going dark. MCF was created about two years ago with a primary goal to support community projects, including funding strategies to keep the theater open as a nonprofit. Schnurr confirmed that over the past year, the MCF has worked toward securing a long-term future for the theatre and that it still hopes that a viable solution can be reached that benefits the community as a whole.

Moraga Mayor Dave Trotter also came to the last showing. He said he feels optimistic a solution might be found with the property owner Mahesh Puri. While no one was willing to confirm anything, it seems that discussions with the owner have been going on for some time.

For months now Zemrak and Pirkle had a month-to-month lease with the theater's owner. Puri did

not respond to a request for comment in time for this article.

Zemrak confirmed that he was not abandoning the town. He added that he would come back if the theater would become a community-owned nonprofit venue.

Over the past eight years, Zemrak and Pirkle made the Rheem a place for great movies, raised enough money to purchase digital projectors, created a film museum and a Hall of Fame, and held countless events, including a large portion of the California Independent Film Festival, at the venue. But Zemrak says that movie attendance never really took off at the theater, that the upkeep of the 60-year-old theater was very high and that labor costs also went up. Zemrak, who is

a CPA, said that if anyone looked at the numbers from a purely financial perspective, that person would throw in the towel. For Zemrak, however, offering theater and movies to the community is a matter of love.

The film industry as a whole has been facing stagnation, if not a decline in movie attendance over the last 10 years. The Motion Picture Association of America reported in 2016 that the U.S./Canada box office revenue was \$11.4 billion, up 2 percent from \$11.1 billion in 2015, a relatively flat number since 2009. The preliminary numbers for 2017 show a decline both in terms of number of tickets sold and revenue. The number of movies released by major studios has sharply declined

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from 128 in 2006 to just 78 in 2017. The number of movie screens in the U.S. has stayed stable over the last six years. Independent theaters, often historical buildings, are developing ways to anchor urban and suburban neighborhoods and inventing creative public-private partnerships, seeking help through the National Park Service to renovate older venues.

Zemrak said that the Orinda Theatre that he is also operating with Pirkle is doing well and will continue to show blockbusters as well independent films. He plans to continue to run the CAIFF there and at the Castro in San Francisco in 2018.

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