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Town discusses use of upcoming injection of Palos Colorados funds

By Vera Kochan

The Palos Colorados Funds, also known as Fund 100 - One Time Developer Fees, are on the verge of a cash injection this June. If all stays on track, the town's bank balance will increase to \$2.5 million.

Norman Veloso, Moraga's director of administrative services, delivered a status presentation to the town council on Jan. 9, outlining the fund's history and future expectations.

Veloso noted how the fund is unrestricted. "It is not limited," he said. "It is not constrained as to how the money is going to be used. It's just like any general fund revenue money that the council can then decide how to use that money as it fits the priorities and the needs of the council."

Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg advised the town council to "look at the impacts at that time and what else has happened in the community, and find out if some of that funding would be appropriately allocated towards some of the impacts and additional recreation or open space."

One idea proposed was to use the funds to build a multi-purpose gymnasium in town. Moraga School District Superintendent Bruce Burns opened up the public comment portion of the council meeting with his appeal. "As the town considers the allocation of the Palos Colorados funds and negotiating future developments, I strongly encourage serious consideration to develop athletic fields and to partnering with your school district to explore, along with our foundation, service groups and athletic organizations, a multi-use community facility on the Joaquin Moraga campus," he said.

Suzanne Jones, on behalf of Preserve Lamorinda Open Space, said, "We would suggest that while some of the funds may be reasonably expended on other priorities, a portion should continue to be used toward open space and recreation opportunities as they arise."

Former mayor Dave Trotter spoke in support of Burns' cause by adding, "This is an opportunity for the council to advance these interests, to understand that the quality of the schools are what make this an attractive place to live, along with our open space and keeping our property values high." Trotter concluded, "It's a chance for this council to leave a lasting and visible legacy that will benefit Moraga's children, families and everybody here for generations to come."

Mayor Roger Wykle cited many of the immediate needs of the town by naming storm drain maintenance costs, asset replacement, unfunded pension liability, and as Moraga grows, more legal fund issues. However, he said, "We also need to do some nice things for Moraga."

Vice Mayor Kymberleigh Korpus and council members Mike McCluer and Steve Woehleke all agreed that infrastructure needs come first and that it is crucial for the town to build up its General Fund reserves in the event of another unforeseen calamity.

Council Member Renata Sos summarized, "Given that the timing and the potential inflow of additional funds is uncertain, I would love to be optimistic, but I believe we need to be conservative, and I think the conservative view would be to take this a step at a time." She concluded, "In my view, it would be premature for us at this juncture, before we know about the timing and certainty of any additional funds, to make any hard and fast rules or set any hard and fast policies about how we're going to use the money." With that, Wykle advised Battenberg to "stay the course."

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