



## Stop Signs Replace Bump

By Sophie Braccini



Fresh new stop signs at Camino Pablo and Hodges Photo Sophie Braccini

“I was stunned when I came back from Spring Break and the raised cross-walk at Hodges was gone,” says Camino Pablo PTA President Christina Da Rodda. “What was more concerning was that the stop signs that had been promised were not there either, leaving the intersection virtually unprotected,” she continued. This latest development in the saga of traffic calming devices in Moraga was the expected outcome of a decision made by the Council on January 16th of this year. Now it was up to the Council to keep its word and add the stop signs it had promised.

The January 16th Council meeting put a stop to the raging discussion among proponents and opponents to the three raised crosswalks on Camino Pablo. The ‘speed cushions’ were installed last year to slow down traffic and protect children walking to and from schools Camino Pablo Elementary (CP) and Joaquin Moraga Intermediate (JM). In its decision, the Council had required staff to leave one table in place (at Oxford), to remove one (at Hodges) with advice from a traffic engineer regarding possible stop signs, and to have the third one in front of JM re-evaluated.

Jill Mercurio, the Town Engineer, said the table at Hodges was removed during the spring break according to plan. Her report indicated that the amount of traffic at that crossing didn’t justify a stop sign, although one could be installed for traffic calming reasons. This justification was the rationale used by the Council,

which unanimously voted to have the stop signs installed. “We need to keep faith with the people of Moraga,” said Vice-Mayor Dave Trotter.

But the decision wasn’t enough to completely satisfy Da Rodda. For months, she’s been trying to get the speed limit on all of Camino Pablo permanently reduced to 25 mph. “We need to have consistency in our speed limits,” she insisted, continuing, “We are the only school in the area that does not have that rule in place.”

Mayor Deschambault asked the Mercurio if she had studied the question. Mercurio had, and explained to a perplexed audience that a town is not free to do whatever it pleases as far as speed limits are concerned.

Camino Pablo is classified as an “urban arterial,” which cannot have speed limits below 35 mph. Other streets such as Donald Dr. have the same status in the Town, probably the result of administrative decisions that were made even before its incorporation. The first step requires the reclassification of that street as an “urban collector,” which would allow the Town to seek a permanent 25mph limit. Mercurio will engage in that process, which will take a few months.

The last part of the project is the raised crosswalk in front of JM. Councilmember Mike Metcalf was of the opinion to have the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) re-evaluate the whole traffic impact on adjacent routes such as Larch and Rimer. “This is a whole system,” said Metcalf, “and it should be studied as such.”

New TSAC Chair, Barbara Simpson, didn’t agree, “We will study issues as they come up,” she said, “let’s implement the stop signs for safety reasons and if there are impacts on neighboring streets we will address it in good time.”

This opinion prevailed and the Council instructed staff to have the traffic engineer present its report studying alternatives for traffic calming around JM, including possible stop signs at Dickenson and Camino Pablo, “where,” according to Councilmember Bird, who is the only one on the Council with a child enrolled at CP, “many children cross the road as well.” The issue should come back to the Council on May 28th.