

Published September 17, 2008

TSAC Gets Ready to Tackle Moraga's Roads

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga's Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) presented a new Traffic Calming Guide for the Town Council's approval on September 10th. The new text, that clarifies procedures and aims at efficiently gathering public support, puts the Fire and Police Departments at the center of the decision making process when it comes to installing high impact traffic calming devices on the roads, such as the raised speed tables that until recently divided the Town. When the new TSAC was appointed in January 2008, one of its first missions was to propose a new version of the Guide. TSAC Chair Barbara Simpson says the committee's mission is to act as "a buffer between citizens and Council so the small issues do not bog down the elected body." The Guide was a necessary tool for the Committee to accomplish its mission. It took TSAC seven months and many additional meetings to completely analyze and recompose the 2000 version of the Guide. The result was highly praised by the Council, which unanimously voted to approve it. The most important changes brought forth by the text regard the way to collect citizen input and the systematic involvement of the Fire and Police authorities in the decision process. The traffic calming elements are broken down in 3 categories: level 1 measures - that involve education and enforcement but do not affect driveways, level 2 measures - that involve changes to signage or pavement markings and level 3 measures - that involve physical modifications to the street. Level 1 measures do not require anybody's support but recommend the approval by the Police department. Level 2 and 3 require citizen approval: 75% approval by petition of citizens abutting the change and 70% of citizens within 300' of the change; other affected citizens' approval is never required. The approval of the Police and Fire departments is required only for level 3 measures, while TSAC and Town Council need to approve level 2 and 3 measures. During the public comment period, some residents argued that a calming device installed on a major road, even if they do not live within 300' of the device, might impact them. They were reminded that they could always appeal to the Town Council, which has the final decision on these matters. TSAC's role was immediately put to the test when the next issue on the agenda came forth. It was a simple approval of the re-classification of Camino Pablo and Donald Drive. Those two roads had been classified as "Arterial" in the old days when they were supposed to be continued and connecting to adjacent cities. Town Engineer Jill Mercurio, acting at the request of the Council, proposed to re-classify them as "Collector or Local." Some residents saw this move as an attempt by the Town to prepare the ground to ultimately reduce speed permanently, particularly on Camino Pablo, and demanded that the issue be transferred to TSAC for study. Police Chief Ruppenthal repeatedly stated that the classification was not related to speed limitation, but the debate went on nonetheless. Finally, Council member Bird remarked that the reclassification was not a traffic calming measure and thus not a TSAC issue; she made a motion to simply drop the matter and it was adopted by 3 members of the Council.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA