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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

It is truly dumbfounding when a mere three city officials can change over thirty years of Moraga tradition over the very passionate protests of hundreds of community members. The limited dog hours at Rancho Laguna Park have brought me immense pleasure and many friends over the past thirteen years, and I will miss that privilege greatly. Unfortunately, the DOGmatic decision by the Moraga city council on the 14th aims to end any off-leash activities in either of the city's user-friendly parks.

I will also miss shopping in Moraga as I pass through on my way to the park, and I hope the retail community and the property owners prepare themselves for the drop off in customers from Lafayette and Orinda that will result. I will have no reason to shop in Moraga anymore. I will miss that too, but Orinda has all the services I need on my way in and out of town.

It's a doggone shame.

Diana Stephens

Orinda

Editor:

Moragans need to understand what is happening with Rancho Laguna Park and with the governing process in our town. The prospect of losing this unique off--leash setting is extremely disheartening to Moraga's dog owners but the arbitrary process exhibited by the Town Council in reaching its decision to end thirty years of this cherished activity should be disturbing to all citizens of Moraga.

The isolated setting of Rancho Laguna Park is ideal for dogs to safely exercise and socialize while their owners do the same. Dogs are allowed off--leash in Rancho Laguna only before 9AM and after 6PM (4PM from October 1 to March 31). For those few hours each day, even in the rain, the park is alive with dogs and their people. The rest of the day, from 9 AM until early evening, the park is available for use by everyone except off--leash dogs and most of the time it is deserted. It has worked this way for decades and it has worked well. Why has the Town Council suddenly decided that the primary users of Rancho Laguna will now be forbidden?

The three Council members who voted for the ban on March 14th offered no rationale other than the fear that a child might be bitten by a dog. No recognition that no such incident had occurred in thirty years of off--leash activity or that children can use the park free of dogs for most of the day. No explanation of what had changed to suddenly make the situation dangerous. No incident reports of dogs harming or threatening people in the park, no surveys of park usage, no reports on how the park will be used by groups other than dog owners. In fact the only relevant actual data submitted was a petition signed by 350 Moraga residents asking to keep the park as is. The signers of that petition and the parade of residents who pleaded at the meeting to preserve the current off--leash hours or curtail them in a reasonable manner were simply ignored.

The Council has the power to end thirty years of an activity enjoyed by many hundreds, if not thousands, of Moraga residents, but to do so without a compelling reason is irresponsible. Had the Council honestly wanted to find a resolution that would allow usage of the park by the most people, they would have considered a change in the allowable off--leash hours rather than an outright ban. Many very reasonable proposals for curtailing the hours were suggested at the meeting but the Council did not even address these options. One has to wonder what is really behind this illogical action.

A second reading of the revised ordinance is on tonight's agenda. This is the last chance to appeal the Council's ill--conceived action. All concerned Moragans need to be there to witness their Town Council in action.

Sincerely,
Trish Bare
Moraga

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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