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Town Council Endorses All-access Park at Commons

By Sophie Braccini



The Moraga Council unanimously endorsed the universal design playground benefitting all children of all abilities that the Rotary has offered to donate to the town.

The council also threw its weight behind locating the new amenities in the center of town at the Commons Park, to maximize access, energy and visibility, rather than at Rancho Laguna Park. It offered to possibly fund any extra grading cost that would be needed to locate the structure at the Commons Park. The Moraga Rotary will soon unveil its fundraising campaign.

Several residents spoke at the meeting in favor of locating the park at the Commons. Their main focus was inclusion. "It's about doing it the right way; it's about special need kids not feeling special," said resident Barry Behr, detailing his conversation with

Walnut Creek officials who chose the most central location in their city to include universal design play structures where kids already go to play.

Parks and Recreation Commission Chair Jeanette Fritzky, speaking as a resident, added that the Commons Park was the area where most of the town's energy was and that locating the new all-abilities structure there would demonstrate a degree of acceptance that the rest of society has not reached yet. Such a universal design park would be the first of its kind in Lamorinda.

Kevin Reneau, the president of the Moraga Rotary, explained after the meeting how the project originally was set to be located at the Rancho Laguna Park. "We first visited the Commons with Jay Ingram (Moraga's Parks and Recreation director) several months ago, then Rancho Laguna Park," he recalls. "In that park there is already a flat pad ready to receive a new structure. It seemed to be the most cost effective option."

It is likely that fitting the all-access structure at the Commons will require extra work. At the meeting Ingram showed a drawing that sketched where the new structure could be placed and explained that grading would be required, paths moved, and that the additional expense could be in the \$100,000 range.

Reneau said the Rotary needed certainty regarding the town's support to start their fundraising campaign. He added that a more central location was even better for the project, as long as the extra cost could be covered.

That's when the council stepped up to the plate. Council member Phil Arth said that the town could endorse the project without specifying the location, then he added, "If the Rotary comes with a quarter million dollars, then the town would come up with the \$100,000 from Palos money, a perfect use of it."

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