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## A new Finestra (window) opens at the Hacienda

By *Sophie Braccini*

A special town meeting was scheduled on Tuesday, April 17 to discuss a lease contract between the Town of Moraga and Jeff Assadi to open a restaurant on part of the ground floor of the Hacienda de las Flores. The meeting happened after this paper went to press. At the time Lamorinda Weekly discussed with stakeholders, all were hopeful that this contract would be approved as they saw this partnership as the best possible option for the building.

For years the Hacienda subcommittee has worked with successive town staff and interested parties to find an economically viable solution for the Hacienda, a town landmark that exudes charm but is underused and requires many updates.

The subcommittee was supposed to come to the council with the elements of a request for proposal, when Assadi contacted the town. The experienced restaurateur was running La Finestra until the building on Lafayette Circle burned to the ground last July. Assadi has been looking to resettle since.

The rush in the process - Assadi has other options and is on a timeline to be able to keep his onerous food and beverage license - ruffled some feathers, but the council decided that a special public meeting be conducted on April 17 to accommodate both the busy man and democratic transparency.

Wendy Scheck, a Moraga resident who sat on the committee for years, explains that the lease is a unique opportunity to fulfill several important requirements: maintain the Hacienda as a mixed-use community venue; increase revenues from the property; have it open every day, including weekends to the public; and address needed maintenance.

Jeff Assadi's plan is to open a new full-service La Finestra including catering operations.

The proposal included the town making an initial expense, not to exceed \$60,000 for a new ADA restroom, an investment that would remain with the property. Current recreation activities would be relocated to the Casita and La Sala. The Hacienda grounds, including the Pavilion would still be available for rental for weddings, private events or meetings. The restaurant would become the preferred caterer for the Hacienda events.

The proposed lease terms would be five years, renewable, with a market rate rent, plus a percentage rent on net revenue.

Results of the April 17 meeting will be added to the online publication of this article.

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[back](#)

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