

Moraga town council declines to donate towards Painted Rock fund; JMLT not giving up hope



South side of the property above Rheem Blvd.

Photo Andy Scheck

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The town of Moraga made a \$10,000 donation toward the John Muir Land Trust acquisition of the 600-acre Carr Ranch open space property in 2016. This funding was available, however, because a local developer had cut down a buckeye tree that was intended to remain and negoti-

ated a \$10,000 fine for their actions.

At a Jan. 9 council meeting, Administrative Services Director Norm Veloso provided a PowerPoint presentation and overview of the Palos Colorados Funds – Fund 100, outlining specifics of the Settlement Agreements and financial implications as well as a General Plan fee installment schedule, and a summary of the revenue in-

cluding past decisions made by the town council as to the use of the funds. At the time it was noted by Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg that there were no constraints identified in the Settlement Agreement or in the legal documents as to how the funds could be used by the town.

Korpus stated at that meeting that she had been persuaded the town council was not morally or legally obligated to spend the funds in any particular way, although based on the way the funds had originated, she would like to use them for recreational or economic development purposes if possible, and agreed at the time that "it would be nice to use the funds for open space acquisition." She added that she was grateful there was nothing to stop the town council from using the funds for infrastructure purposes but her vision was that the funds be used conservatively, and suggested the town's greatest need was a reserve account.

Suzanne Jones of Preserve Lamorinda Open Space noted during the Jan. 9 meeting that the 1999 Palos Colorados Settlement Agreement outlined that while a portion of the funds were intended to mitigate traffic and cover other development impacts, other funds were envisioned to provide

recreation and open space benefits to the town.

Former mayor Dave Trotter commented that while Palos Colorados funds were unrestricted, the history of the Settlement Agreement had motivated prior town councils to spend the funds on items which had a recreational nexus.

Although Woehleke and Sos voted against the town donating funds to support the purchase of the Painted Rock property, they have volunteered to walk through Moraga's neighborhoods to solicit citizen donations. According to Woehleke, "The objective is to ensure that as many homes in Moraga are visited as possible to ensure all residents know the importance of the Painted Rock acquisition campaign." He added, "A number of town leaders and citizens have already proactively contacted me to walk."

Woehleke said he plans the walk to begin as soon as possible and will continue through April and into May. Anyone interested in walking can contact him at spwoehleke@comcast.net.

For more information or to donate toward the campaign, visit <https://jmlt.org/index.html>.

Quick thinking OUSD facilities director uses goats to save the day

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Before the goats were released, House went door to door along Ivy Drive to deliver a leaflet announcing the plan to release goats. He also spoke directly with a number of homeowners to alert them.

"During and afterwards," House said, "I received numerous emails from the residents who were pleased and entertained watching the goats."

Some of the emails lamented, "The goats are gone ... and we all miss them. I made friends with a lot of

them, and they kept calling me: Daa ... aaa ... aad!" Others said, "This is the best! Makes my day! The goats are 'adorable'! Thanks for sharing!" and noted how it was "really wonderful to know that the District (the OUSD Board of Trustees) is serious about acting on this issue.

Given the proximity of OIS to the creek vegetation and tall trees, it is in everyone's interest to address this (fire) hazard." One resident noted how it was clever scheduling to bring in the goats during spring break. "Now, if only the District could collect and sell the milk," they wrote.

Others offered continued support: "Now we are eagerly awaiting the cleanup crew to cut out all that brushy stuff to Cal Fire standards. Please keep me abreast of developments, and let me know if you need volunteers. I can organize our neighbors to help."

Wagner Ranch Nature Area wildlife festival gives the public a glimpse of rare resource

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Tours of the historic ranch will be given every half hour starting at noon. Tours start from the Tour Table with Professors Emeritus Reg Barrett, John Helms, and others. Visitors can also meet solar oven specialist, Wendy Helms; Master Gardeners, and Doc Hale, mountain lion whisperer and environmentalist.

Guests are welcome to bring their own picnic lunch or visit the four food trucks

on site including: El Gran Taco Loco, Guys Tri Tip, Mini Street Burger, and Izzy A's frozen desserts. All trucks offer a vegetarian option. The trucks will be located near the entrance to the festival, with seating just inside the gates.

There will be musical performances by Orinda Intermediate School Strings and Jazz Band, and ALMA Music. Children can pick up wildlife passports and get them stamped at the stations for a

free honey stick at the Friends of the Nature Area Station. Also near the entrance adults can check out the native plants for donations.

Toy bug hunts will take place in the garden at 1 and 3 p.m. Children kindergarten age and younger can take home toy critters. Free timed tickets will be available for pond explorations, which will take place every 30 minutes starting at 11:30 a.m.

Activities in the Central

Area will feature Native American Singers and Drummers, Cynthia Brian, author and actor, environmentalist Jim (Doc) Hale, Aeroponic Gardens with Gwen O'Neill, Girl Scout and Boy Scout Project Demonstrations; Wildlife Columnist, Joan Morris; Wildlife Tattoos by Coyote Brush Studios; face painting by Orinda Juniors; Sustainable Contra Costa; OIS Green Team hands-on activities; Orinda Historical Society; Friends of the Moraga Adobe;

and the Old Yellow House – net-zero historic home on Moraga Way. There will also be nature fun by the East Bay Municipal Utility District, tile painting, and nature art. Daniel Phillips will present Chemistry Magic and Steve Gentry will present Buzzing with Honey Bees. Friends of Orinda Creeks, Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, and Plein Air Artists will also be present.

Wilder Art and Garden Center up and running, or at least walking

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Council members Amy Worth and Nick Kosla were in attendance, along with attorney Fran Layton, Bruce Yamamoto

representing the developer, Madelyn Mallory, a Wilder resident, City Manager Steve Salomon, Director of Public Works Larry Theis, Associate Planner Jason Chen, and Trimble. The other topics on the

agenda were parking enforcement, and extension of the Wilder Subdivision improvement agreement.

Since the opening of play fields four and five, it seems that Wilder has been experiencing parking in areas where parking is not permitted, and the residents, the developer, OGLLC, and the Wilder Homeowners Association have reached out to the city, asking that it take on parking enforcement, even on Wilder's private streets, because of the impact of the city amenities.

Residents who attended the subcommittee meeting expressed frustration at not being able to park at the Wilder mail kiosks and concern about the safety of traffic around the play fields. They complained about illegal parking on Wilder Road and on Bigleaf Road.

HOA president Greg Schwartz thanked the city, noting that the enforcement efforts that have already been put in place by the city have been a tremendous help and the problem has been mitigated "a ton." One resident complained that the Holy Names lacrosse team routinely unloads their players on Wilder Road, and the players then climb over the fence into the play field. Theis noted that if users of the play fields are observed repeatedly violating the traffic and parking regulations, they could lose their deposits, or even their right to use the play fields. Worth noted that the city values the shared facilities and places a high priority on not inconveniencing the Wilder residents. The subcommittee agreed with the enforcement plan which



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Large wood sculpture by Stan Dann on loan to City of Orinda hangs in Art and Garden Center Foyer.

will appear before the full council on April 23.

The subcommittee also discussed the possibility of an access easement over a portion of Bigleaf Road to enable better access to the Art and Garden Center. Although the developer, OGLLC, has offered the city an easement over a parcel which covers the portion of Bigleaf Road up to Paintbrush Lane necessary to access the back driveway of the Center, residents objected on the grounds that the parcel will come into the ownership of the Wilder HOA when the homes are all sold, and they believe that they should have a say in the fate of the parcel.

The topic of the easement is complicated, in part because of the current parking issues along Bigleaf Road and the city's avowed desire to develop a further parking lot close to the back of the Art and Garden Center. This parking lot could be visible to the homes on Coffee Berry Lane. An additional concern, pointed out by some of the residents at the meeting, is that if the parking lot has 25

spaces, and one ADA compliant space, it could induce hundreds of cars to drive up Bigleaf Road to investigate if parking were available. Other concerns included people congregating or partying in the parking lot.

The residents seemed to agree that they were not opposed to the easement in principal, but they did want several things in return. Schwartz said that the HOA had concerns in four areas: financial, liability, landscaping and restrictions on use. Madelyn Mallory said that the residents wanted to control the maintenance of the road, but wanted the city to contribute proportionally to the amount of public use. She also said that residents might be more comfortable with a temporary easement, to see how things go, before considering a permanent easement. Steve Salomon noted that the idea of the additional parking lot was still in the planning stages, and would not even be a consideration for some years in the future.

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