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## Earlier Town Council meetings on the horizon in Moraga

By Vera Kochan

The Town Council is expected to authorize an earlier start time to its meetings, moving them up an hour from the current 6:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. In order to do this, the Ordinance needs to be approved during the next Town Council meeting scheduled for July 10. The chain of events would then require an update to

the Town Council Protocols through a Resolution. Conveniently, a Resolution amending the Town Council Protocols was adopted during the Council's June 26 meeting in favor of the new 5:30 p.m. meeting time. The new meeting start time will become effective 30 days pending the final adoption on July 10.

It wasn't that long ago when Moraga's council meetings began at 7 p.m. and would often last to 11 p.m. In February 2021, the meetings were moved to 6:30 p.m. in the hopes that they would conclude before 10:30 p.m.

According to the June 26 staff report by Town Clerk Amy Heavener,

"There are pros and cons to starting a Council meeting at 5:30 p.m. On the pro side, the Town organization will reduce costs and improve efficiencies associated with staff overtime, additional consultant costs, utilities, etc. Council members, and members of the public, will be able to conduct business earlier in the

evening and return to their families at a more reasonable hour."

The report continued, "On the con side, council members, and members of the public, will have a shorter break between their daytime employment and the start of a council meeting. This may make it harder to eat dinner, or take care of

work and/or family and personal matters before the council meeting."

It was noted during the June 26 meeting, that many of California's municipalities have shifted their council meetings to earlier start times due to technological advances that provide constituents with remote viewing capabilities.

## Spotting mis/disinformation in media during the upcoming elections

By Vera Kochan

With so many sources of nefarious news to filter through and artificial intelligence capabilities on the rise, how can the average voter learn to spot fake news when it comes to election information?

The Moraga Library offered a "Mis/Disinformation: Election Edition" presentation on June 25 that was sponsored by The League of Women Voters Diablo Valley (LWV), with the intention of teaching voters "how to spot fake news, fact-check sources, and navigate the complexities of today's media landscape."

In order to start the evening on a trustworthy note, the slide presentation began with a statement identifying LWV as, "a non-partisan organization encourag-

ing informed and active participation in government. The League never endorses or opposes candidates or political parties. We influence public policy through education and advocacy."

LWV representatives Martha Van Orshoven and Paul Derksen's presentation reminded attendees that "it's all about where you get your news from and if you believe what you hear." They added that often information is presented out of context in order to weave together material that could be conceived as true. AI capabilities have become so sophisticated that it's nearly impossible to tell if images have been faked.

Van Orshoven explained that "Misinforma-

tion" is the sharing of false information without the intent to harm.

"Disinformation" involves creating and sharing false information with the intent to harm or mislead. "Malinformation" is based on fact but used out of context with the intent to harm or mislead. She also put forth that AI uses applications that perform complex tasks that once required human input, such as Machine Learning -- (Alexa/SIRI) or Deep Learning -- more information received much faster and foundationally relies on data from humans.

Depending on the age group, voters' news sources come in various types of media form: 18-29 year olds primarily rely on news web-

sites/apps, pod casts, and search engines; 30-49 year olds overall prefer search engines and television, with a smattering of news websites/apps and pod casts; 50-64 year olds look to search engines and television; and the 65+ age group relies the heaviest on television with a bit of search engines and newspapers. All age groups have been known to get their news from print or radio, but the statistics were not overwhelming. Also, knowing where various news sources lean is a good indicator of what type of information bias the voter can expect. The categories typically fall under: left, lean left, center, lean right, and right.

Van Orshoven discussed the five standards

of credible journalism which includes using multiple sources, verifying sources, avoiding obvious bias, providing context, and balanced reporting.

Derksen brought up various ways to spot "Mis/Disinformation" through researching the source and cross-checking the information, checking the date and domain, reading past the headline and examining an article's content, and being wary of emotionally charged content. He also stated that if a story offers links, follow them. If there are no links, no quotations, or no references, it could be a red flag warning to fake news. He added, if an image looks suspicious use a reverse search en-

gine such as TinEye (tin-eye.com) or Google Images (lens.google.com) for verification.

There are several sources for trustworthy election information. The Secretary of State website is: sos.ca.gov. Another is the website for the County Elections Office: contra-costavote.gov. LWV provides a website that gives all voting information: vote411.org. Contra Costa County offers a website (secure-election.org) that explains the 48-step verification process it uses to secure elections by securing technology, facilities, processes and people.

## Moraga Police are investigating a series of thefts and burglaries

On Sunday June 30 about 6:30 a.m., Moraga Police received a call of suspicious persons who were trying car door handles and looking into parked vehicles in the Rimer/Camino Pablo/Larch neighborhoods. When officers responded to the area, they located the subjects entering a garage on Larch. The suspects were able to get into a grey Lexus and drove out of the area at a high rate of speed. Offi-

cers pursued the vehicle on Canyon Road, but discontinued the pursuit because of safety concerns.

Officers found that the subjects drove a stolen Lexus into Town and entered at least 15 different unlocked vehicles throughout those neighborhoods. Unfortunately, some of those vehicles had garage door remote controls inside, allowing the suspects access to garages, through

which they were able to enter residences. We are currently investigating all of the incidents and coordinating with other jurisdictions where these individuals also committed crimes.

For those of you in the Rimer/Camino Pablo/Larch neighborhoods who have security cameras, please check your cameras during the 6:00 to 6:30 a.m. time period and look for recordings of individuals who

are checking car door handles or garage doors or of a grey Lexus cruising by your home. If you have these recordings, please contact us via Dispatch at 925-284-5010.

For everyone in town, please ensure that you keep your vehicle and house doors closed and locked when you are not using them. Please do not store valuables in your vehicles -- even those things that may not be valuable to you,

but may appear to be valuable to someone else. Please also be aware of your surroundings and report any suspicious persons to the Moraga Police by calling Dispatch at 925-284-5010 (for emergencies, dial 9-1-1).

Remember that criminals are not dumb -- they like to go places where they can easily steal things and escape. If we work together and make it difficult for them

by ensuring that vehicles and houses are secure, they will hopefully realize that it is not easy to commit crimes in Moraga and go somewhere else.

Thank you for helping keep Moraga a safe community.  
*Provided by the Moraga Police Department*

## Canyon's phone service restored as Moraga gets hit

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Tipsters with information can remain anonymous and should call local law enforcement or AT&T Asset Protection Hotline Group at (800) 807-4205.

Remote areas -- and sometimes not-so-remote, like Orinda -- have been experiencing phone wire thefts of great magnitude. The

Lamorinda area has joined the ranks of Pinole and Hercules, which also experienced loss of wire, and therefore telephone and DSL (direct service line) service, in June. While most suburban communities are sometimes able to reroute 911 calls, Canyon is too isolated for such an option.

"If this had occurred during fire weather,"

Goodwin said. "We would be out of luck." Many would be unable to call neighbors or alert the community in case of any emergency. "It was terrible for me," Goodwin said. "It was 12 days!"

Similar to the trend of catalytic converter theft, Canyon was hit by thieves likely trying to sell the copper wire from the phone lines. Recycling centers will buy

whole phone lines and strip them for the copper within, which sells for about \$3.25 per pound. Canyon's phone lines are believed to have been taken by vandals climbing up redwood trees to cut the lines, which were then cut into 6-foot sections.

Phone service has long been tricky in Canyon, where even today wireless internet service can be sketchy. In many parts of the unincorporated community, only AT&T has worked. Many residents rely only on landlines for communication and internet service through DSL. Even many Canyonites who have cell phones couldn't rely on them for backup.

Longtime resident Erik Olafsson cannot get cell reception in his house, so the 12 days without proved a problem. He had to go out his front door and climb a 150-foot hill to get reception, and has longtime friends he talks with almost daily.

"It was a lot of trips up that hill," he said.

## Hammond St. Neighbors Celebrate Leo Saephan's retirement after 38 years of mail carrier service

Submitted by Sherilyn Hagan



Back row: Jim Kneis, Robert Holloway, Lauren Acevedo, Tom VonderBrink, Greg Costa, Scott Reynolds ; Front row : Mark Zemsch, Kim Zemsch Mailman Leo Saephan, Sherilyn Hagan, Kris Costa

Photo Dan Hagan



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