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Lighting Assessment District Vote

By Sophie Braccini

Some Moraga residents will soon pay more to see the light at night. According to Town staff, residents that benefit from public streetlights currently pay an average of \$16 a year, an amount unchanged in 20 years; the Town has subsidized the lighting from its General Fund. An election was

conducted as a mail-in ballot (per Prop 218, which regulates votes on special benefits assessment districts). All residents who have lights on their streets and are not living on main arteries received a yay or nay question regarding the funding of the lights. 4,155 ballots were mailed (1 ballot per house lo-

cated on a street that benefits from public lighting) and 2,542 were returned (about 61%). 57% percent of the weighted returned ballots approved the increase; the results will be certified at the June 9th Council meeting. The proposed new assessment cost is \$58 per home.

Moraga's Housing Element Certified

Council cheered staff on Wednesday, May 26th, for obtaining the certification of the Town's housing element. "Moraga is one of only four cities to have gotten this certification," said Mayor Ken Chew, "the three others being Oakley, Walnut Creek and San Ramon." Key to the Department of Housing and Community

Development's Certification was the designation by the Town of a six-acre zone in the downtown area where multifamily developments are permitted by-right at minimum densities of 20 units per acre. "This acceptance should allow the Town to apply for special funding," added the Mayor.

S.Braccini

Innovative Public Gardens

By Sophie Braccini



Jill Mercurio (right) and Kyle Salvin discuss the state of the retention basin

of two major donors. Kenny Murakami, of the Moraga Garden Center, provided a discount of over \$1,000 on the purchase of trees and plants; long-time library user, supporter, and donor Joan Bruzzone provided over \$4,000 for the purchase of plants.

Wire cages were installed around each plant, so gophers would not kill them, and a new irrigation system was installed. "It could not be drip because pedestrians crossing over the landscape and would disturb the little plastic tubes," explains Fleck. "Maintenance has been minimal," adds Town maintenance worker Jose Limon.

Senior Community Library Manager Linda Waldroup appreciates the display. "Library patrons have been making positive comments about the new garden," she says.



Part of the team responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the library garden, (left to right) sitting: Alison Fleck, Joan Wolfensperger, Linda Waldroup, Jill Mercurio; standing: David Kruegel, Ron Bass, Jose Limon

Photos Sophie Braccini

Recently two new public gardens were created in Moraga, one at the Town's corporation yard at 331 Rheem Boulevard, which showcases native plants and a drainage basin; the other in front of the library - a low maintenance, drought resistant, colorful display. Moraga is poor in cash, but rich in volunteers and donors - these gardens were created and are maintained through the efforts of groups such as the Friends of the Moraga Library and local business donors, with the support of the Town staff.

The garden set along the road at 331 Rheem was formed when the Town moved its corporate yard to that location. "We decided to create a demonstration native plant garden for residents," says Public Works Director and Town Engineer Jill Mercurio, "another interesting feature of the garden is the retention basin that was constructed for us by Bay Area Drainage that serves two purposes: filtration, and delaying storm run-off."

Mercurio explains that it is now a requirement of the Regional Water Quality Control Board of the San Francisco Bay Region (Water Board) that entities building new impervious surfaces set in place mechanisms to slow water run-off. "In a residence, it can be a planter box under a gutter," says Mercurio, "here we did not need such a large basin, but it is an interesting demonstration feature

and it was a donation." In addition to delaying the flow of runoff water into the creeks, the six-foot deep basin that is mostly filled up by engineered soil acts as a filter if someone washes a vehicle in the corp yard.

The design of the garden at 331 Rheem was done by Town staff member Ruben Ochoa. Interesting features of the garden include a recycled plastic bench and an ADA-compliant permeable path made of decomposed granite.

The library garden was financed entirely by private gifts. Last year, a fire that ignited the dense growth of juniper in front of the library made mandatory the transition to more esthetic landscaping. It took the determination of the Friends of the Moraga Library (Friends) to make it happen.

The Friends' Board of Directors initiated the process by convening a discussion group that included landscape designer Alison Fleck of Simply Perfect Gardens, Town staff, and representatives of the Moraga Garden Club (which cares for many of the existing garden displays around town). "The goal was to plan attractive landscaping that was environmentally friendly and deer-resistant, that required little water, little maintenance, and had a long life expectancy," explains Board president David Kruegel. The Friends gave the bulk of the \$20,000 needed for the project, and got the support

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