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Bumps on the way to Bocce Ball

By Sophie Braccini



Bocce ball at the Moraga Commons Photo Ohlen Alexander

Mike Segrest, "The Town's rule is that the fee is calculated in proportion to the amount of grading that occurs." The Parks and Recreation Commission recommended waving the fee entirely, but the Town's lawyer indicated that waiving more than \$5,000 in fees would create a precedent and could be regarded as a violation of labor laws. The Council agreed to waive up to \$4,900, but that did not make the bocce ball players happy.

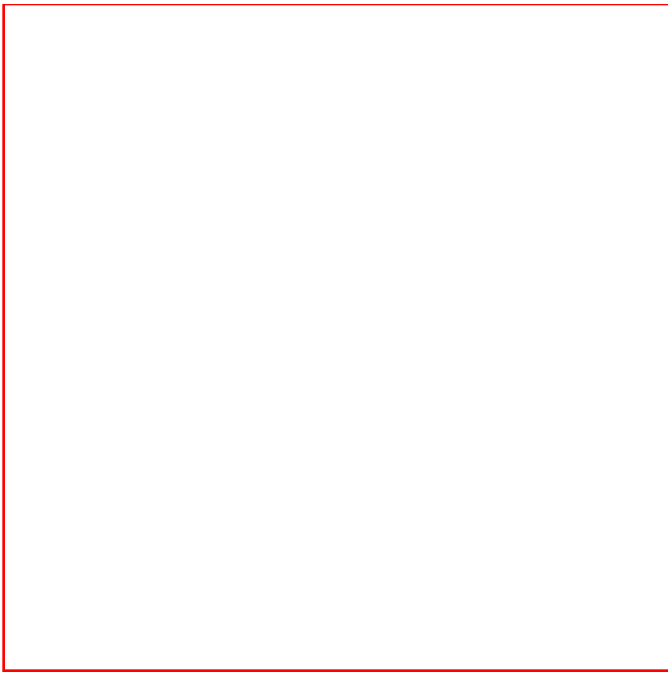
Since the council meeting, a technical visit was made to the park by John Haffner of the Moraga Park Foundation, Lawrence Bennett, a Foundation member and a builder, and Town staff. They determined that the courts could be built on the existing sand, limiting the grading to almost nothing. "The fee that would be left would be a site improvement fee that represents 2.5% of the entire project cost, and that would be about \$300," said Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, "additionally we would have to remove one or two redwood trees, that, according to our municipal code, would have to be replaced by planting three or six new trees on town property." These costs would stay below the \$4,900 that the Town had agreed to waive.

Ingram added that he is awaiting plans for the new courts, which Sidari will provide, so a final map can be drafted and presented to the Public Works Department.

It was anticipated that the project to construct four new bocce ball courts at Rancho Laguna Park would be approved without opposition at the June 23rd meeting of the Moraga Town Council; and indeed it was, in a 5-0 vote. However, bocce ball players marched angrily out of the meeting when told that the Town would waive no more than \$4,900 of the fees that were anticipated for the project. "We are giving the material and the work to the town, we do not want to pay fees on top of it," said Dom Sidari, speaking for the bocce ball group. Since that evening, a more detailed exploration of the site has shown that grading could probably be kept to a minimum and therefore fees could be completely waived. This bumpy road should lead to the construction of the new courts.

Bocce ball has increased in popularity in Moraga and the club is now comprised of 20 teams with members from across Lamorinda. They play on the two courts at the Moraga Commons Park, but are unable to accommodate new potential players due the limited space. Town Staff worked with the group to study possibilities for adding to the existing courts, but the Commons' topography made that difficult. Instead, 4 new courts were proposed where the relatively unused volleyball courts are located at Rancho Laguna Park, a solution that pleased everyone.

Staff's first estimate of fees related to the construction was around \$9,000. "We first envisioned that we would have to grade the site, remove the sand and move in new material," said Town Manager



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