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LED: Let Moraga be Light

By Sophie Braccini



Picture provided by Town Staff

Sherbert, "they emit a rectangle of light that can be focused just on the road/sidewalk and will not shine into neighbors' properties like the large round yellow radiance of the regular lights."

After lengthy negotiations, PG&E and staff agreed on a program that will upgrade all of the streetlights along Moraga Road, Moraga Way, St. Mary's Road, Rheem Boulevard and Camino Pablo using a combination of funding from the EECBG, a low-interest energy loan and the Lighting Assessment District funds. According to staff's calculations, the upgrade will save the town approximately \$5,500 per year in energy costs alone. "That does not include the maintenance and is based on the current 5% increase in energy cost," adds Sherbert, "the pay-off might end up being faster than the 20 years we initially forecasted."

Look out for PG&E trucks in the coming weeks. The utility company agreed to work on weekends to minimize the traffic impact.

Who knew that along the same streets in Moraga some of the lights are owned by the Town while others are owned by PG&E? It's no problem most of the time, but when the Town decided to install LED (light-emitting diode) streetlights to reduce its utility bill by taking advantage of stimulus money that can be used only for Town property, it became a bit complicated.

"When we got the EECB Grant (Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, stimulus money), we could apply it only to our own property, and when I looked at who owned what lights in town, it looked like a patchwork," says Moraga Staff Engineer John Sherbert. He researched the effect of changing light patterns and found it was dangerous for drivers whose eyes need to adjust very rapidly. But the opportunity of 'free' money, lower electricity bill and better lighting was not something to be passed up.

LED lights have been tested by PG&E and are deemed to last 50,000 hours. They use less electricity than old technology and the light they shine is closer to that of the sun, but that is not all. "One of the advantages of the new lights is that they can be very tightly focused," explains

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