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Town News on Nextdoor

By Sophie Braccini

The Town of Moraga recently started posting its bi-weekly newsletter, "About Town," on the social media site Nextdoor.com. Jill Keimach, town manager, said that more than 2000 Moraga residents are currently using Nextdoor. Almost immediately after the town's first post in early July, a concerned resident wondered online why the town was involved in a private neighborhood website. Moraga town clerk Marty McInturf was quick to respond. "The Town of Moraga does not intend to become involved in the privacy of each neighborhood website and the Town has no ability to access any neighborhood website content," she wrote. "In our agreement with Nextdoor.com, the Town can only provide information, not access or participate in neighborhood communications." Nextdoor.com spokesperson Anne Dreshfield confirmed that when public agencies partner with Nextdoor, they are given a Nextdoor account, which allows them to send relevant and timely information to any of the neighborhoods in their jurisdiction that are using Nextdoor, and that these public agencies cannot access any of the content on their neighborhoods' Nextdoor websites - they can only see the comments residents make in response to the agencies' posts. Members also have the ability to mute the agencies' messages.

"Our reason to partner with Nextdoor.com is to provide the Town with another means to communicate information relevant to the community or to a particular individual neighborhood," said McInturf. "We see this as an excellent opportunity to expand our current outreach."

Nextdoor is an online platform organized by neighborhood to which people post news, requests, items for sale, and start discussions about very local topics, such as a visit from a prowler or a wild animal, or how to get a retaining wall approved. (Read a related article, "Virtually Neighbors," on page D1.)

San Francisco-based Nextdoor was launched in 2011. The site has partnered with 190 city agencies, primarily police departments, across the United States. According to Dreshfield, Nextdoor is currently funded by prominent investors and anticipates that the revenue model will focus on working with local businesses to give them an easy way to connect with the people who live around their businesses.

"About Town" can also be viewed on the town's website, www.moraga.ca.us. Moraga uses Nixle to send out emergency information; to sign up for alerts, go to www.nixle.com.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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