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Moraga Planning Commission Says Climate Action Plan Needs More Work

By Sophie Braccini

Last year, 15 Moraga residents with environmental, business and development backgrounds were appointed to the town's Climate Action Task Force and charged with recommending measures that would help Moraga reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Working with the task force recommendations and a consultant, town staff drafted a preliminary climate action plan.

In addition to the environmental benefits that would result if a city's climate action plan is approved, new developments could have a streamlined environmental review process.

A strange dialogue took place between planning commissioners and the chair of the Climate Action Task Force at the Planning Commission's Sept. 18 meeting. As the commission was reviewing the town's draft climate action plan-for possible submission to the air quality regulatory agency for review and comment-task force chair Graig Crossley told commissioners that the task force was not expecting the town to accept all of its recommendations. Task force member Barbara Simpson went a step further, asking commissioners to vote against the plan rather than accepting measures of which the financial implications had not been fully analyzed. "We didn't expect the whole package to be passed in mass because there is no cost associated with it," said Crossley.

Commissioners were split as they considered the draft plan. "(Moraga) could be a model," said Teresa Onoda, who added that the plan should be discussed by the whole town and that stronger requirements could be made for new developments to include renewable energy sources. Tom Marnane said he thought that the plan was a hodgepodge and some proposals were laudable while others were silly. "This is not ready to come to us, not ready to be sent to the town council; we should stop right now," he said. All of the planning commissioners agreed that it was premature to send the draft to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District for review before a cost-benefits analysis had been done.

The commission decided to forward the plan to the Town Council, but not to the BAAQMD; it recommended that the plan not be adopted without a better understanding of the costs and benefits associated with each element, along with a prioritization of the strategies. The commission also asked that the council consider additional community discussion, including scientific input. Moraga's draft climate action plan includes these recommendations, among others:

Land Use and Transportation

- Increase bike ridership by 5 percent
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Achieve a 10 percent, or more, reduction in car trips to schools
- Support Lamorinda's Connectivity Shuttle Program
- Work with the CCTA to implement a carpool/rideshare program
- Support the transition to hybrids and alternative fuel vehicles
- Increase employer participation in Transportation Demand Management programs
- Encourage and allow individuals to raise food at home and in community gardens

Residential Energy Use

- Adopt a green building ordinance impacting all new construction
- Support upgrades of major home appliances to high efficiency models
- Partner with energy service providers to host energy efficiency fairs, workshops, and demonstrations
- Support development of best practices that streamline the solar permitting process
- Support the installation of solar thermal (domestic hot water) on existing buildings

Commercial Energy Use

- Target small and medium businesses with retrofit and rebate opportunities

Conduct targeted outreach to large commercial and industrial utility customers to encourage greater adoption of energy efficiency

Solid Waste

Increase landfill diversion rate to 75 percent by the year 2020

Adopt a mandatory recycling ordinance for multifamily and commercial properties

Water and Wastewater

Develop a local efficient landscape ordinance that exceeds the state's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

Encourage water audits on remodels

Encourage schools and town to use bay-friendly landscaping

Municipal Operations

Purchase alternative fuel or fuel efficient vehicles

Install renewable generation systems on town facilities

Adopt an Energy Efficient Procurement Policy for major building system equipment

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