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## Mulberry Tree Preschool hands over the keys to Growing Light Montessori School

By Vera Kochan



The Moraga Town Council approved a resolution authorizing an assignment of the Ground Lease with Mulberry Tree Preschool and owner, Susan Allison, to Growing Light Montessori School during its Aug. 25 meeting.

The land, located at 1455 St. Mary's Road, is owned by the town (as is Moraga Commons Park). When the lease was set to expire on June 30, Allison appeared before the June 23 town council meeting and renegotiated a Fourth Amendment Ground Lease. It provided for Allison to continue leasing the site for an initial five years, with an option to extend for an additional five years. In addition, a provision for a temporary \$1,000 per month rent reduction for the first four months of the term lease was included along with a provision for lease assignment.

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According to a staff report by Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt, on July 7, the town received notice from Allison requesting to assign her lease to Growing Light. GLMS would assume the existing Mulberry Tree lease agreement, which would expire on June 30, 2026, with an option to extend for an additional five years through June 30, 2031.

GLMS owner, Rachel LaField, attended the Aug. 25 meeting to answer any of the council members' questions. LaField currently owns three campuses - one in Lafayette, one in Kensington and one in Oakland. Included with a letter dated July 20 to the town council, LaField provided family letters of recommendation, landlord letters of recommendation, a business plan with capital improvements, a child care provider license, financial statements, a total assets balance sheet, and more.

"We look forward to working with you to create necessary and inspired childcare offerings for the town of Moraga," stated the GLMS letter. "We are confident that a harmonious and seamless transition is possible for everyone."

Already in the works, GLMS has plans for improvements to the fire alarm system and monitoring; painting and repairs; and landscaping which are expected to cost \$27,000.

The town council also directed Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg and Assistant Town Attorney Denise Bazzano to clarify language from the Fourth Amendment regarding the disposition of improvements on the premises upon lease termination.

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