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• LAMORINDA Community •

Tashiro Named Interim Manager

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Phil Vince (right) welcomes Jay Tashiro Photo Sophie Braccini

"The best part about Jay is that he knows and loves our community," says Mayor Lynda Deschambault. "Even while serving as the City Manager of Corte Madera he chose to maintain his permanent residence in lovely Moraga and commuted to work each day. His experience in a small semi rural community will be a great resource. Corte Madera addressed the same contrast facing Moraga, blending rural sprawling hillsides to its high end homes and growing businesses." She believes that his experience as a former Planning Commissioner and his familiarity with the General Plan

will be valuable in the coming months.

Tashiro has been following the town's affairs through the newspapers and is doing some catching up with Vince. "I haven't met with the Council yet, but I know that one of my roles will be to help recruit the right person for the job and manage the day to day operations," Tashiro adds.

Tashiro is aware that, like many Bay Area cities, one of the challenges of Moraga is its financial situation. "In Corte Madera, 50% of the income was coming from sales taxes; we had a regional shopping center in town. Here sales tax represent only 20% of the income, it's a different type of challenge."

As a former Planning Director, who initiated the study of the General Plan that is in use today, Tashiro takes a great interest in the two competing initiatives that will be on the ballot in November and that could greatly impact land use in town.

That's one of the reasons why he believes that the next Town Manager should have a strong background in planning. "It will all depend on what the Council's needs are, they will establish the criteria for recruitment," explains Tashiro. "They will probably want someone with strong economic development and financial acumen as well." In the meantime, the town rests in his steady and capable hands.

Moraga

Hacienda Foundation Seeks Input

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"The jewel of Moraga" needs to find new sources of income and better serve the community that supports it. The under-utilize facility is going to lose revenue when the remaining town offices are moved, and even doubling the number of weddings will not balance the budget. As of today, the Hacienda costs the Town about \$345,000 a year.

The task of the Foundation is vast. As part of its planning process, the Foundation has decided to poll the community. "Form will follow function," declares Judy Dinkle, who serves as the Chair of the Foundation, "only when we know what the community wants, will we start our fund raising effort." The Foundation members developed a questionnaire that they've been distributing to all of the organizations in town.

Some Moraga residents are not even aware of the existence of the Hacienda. The beautiful facility encompasses three historical buildings surrounded by a very large park that's open to the public. The Cindy Waxman Nature Trail is maintained on the premises, benches and restrooms are available.

Jay Ingram the Parks and Recreation Director is increasing the offering of classes. "We must boost the enrichment activities at the Hacienda. People are not accustomed to coming here for Parks and Recreation related programs/activities," says Ingram, "It is going to take time and education in order for people to realize they no longer have to go to Lafayette or Orinda to participate in recreational activities. It is going to take a culture change."

There are some roadblocks on the way to developing the Hacienda. One is the limited amount of parking spaces available. "One solution would be to move the corporate yard that harbors public vehicles," says Dinkle, "moving the yard would allow access through Moraga Road and would create additional parking spaces."

Another challenge of the building itself is its energy inefficiency. "The roof, foundation, elec-

trical and piping systems are okay," explains Dinkle, "but the buildings are not energy efficient and this means very high operating costs." The inside configuration of the rooms are not optimal either. This was a family estate and the accommodations are not adequate for hosting very large crowds. As a result, the facility is used only for outside weddings.

Margaret DePriester, a former Mayor of Moraga and now a member of the Foundation, believes in the promise of the Hacienda: "We have to keep it as one of Moraga's historic treasures. This place is one of the few reminders of our past. I hope it could become a real community center."

The more responses the Foundation receives, the more political clout it will wield. To participate, you can request the questionnaire by sending an email to: feedback@haciendafoundation.org.

You can also send your responses to the following questions via email:

When were you last at the Hacienda and why did you go? What do you like best and least about the Hacienda? Do you think the Hacienda should be fixed up for the future and if yes what would you like to see it used for? Possibilities: a park, a community center for recreation and education, a Teen center, a Senior center, a rental facility for parties, weddings, meetings, a place for quiet reflection; any other ideas?

What needs to be done to make sure the Hacienda is ready to serve the citizens of Moraga? The Foundation would like to know where residents think the Town resources should be spent: Roads? The Hacienda? Sports fields? Gymnasium? Other? Finally, you should indicate your age group, family size and optionally your name and contact information if you'd like to support the restoration project.

On June 25th, Jay Ingram will present the Foundation's update to the Town Council. The Hacienda de last Flores is located off Moraga Rd, at 2100 Donald Drive.

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Town Council Hard at Work

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Leveling the playing field will be a key objective for the Council, whose responsibility is to fairly inform the public about the potential impact of the two competing measures. "You are not limited to a 9212 report," added the Town's attorney. "You could order a side-by-side analysis of the texts." The idea sounded appealing to the Council but the Town Manager warned that time and money would not be available for such a report.

As the **raised crosswalks** were again brought in front of the Council, the audience felt confident it would be for the last time. Unfortunately, the crosswalks are turning into quicksand. The raised crosswalk under examination that night was the one situated at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School.

An engineer from Fehr & Peers recommended leaving the apparatus as is, "this is the only

solution to force drivers to slow down," he said, "if there is no discomfort and compliance alone is required, some people will not respect the speed limit."

Mike Mentink, Fire Marshall with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, reiterated his agency's opposition to any obstacle that impairs emergency vehicles response time.

Dave Trotter and Mike Metcalf were ready to do away with the raised crosswalk at JM, while Mayor Deschambault and Ken Chew didn't see any possible alternative to that device that wouldn't compromise the safety of children. Council member Bird insisted that a new hypothesis be studied: a stop sign at Rimer. "I am not ready to remove that raised crosswalk until we have a safe solution for the students at JM," she said.

The motion adopted required that the device be left in

place until the study of that stop sign be made. After the meeting, Stan Roth, from the "Citizens Moraga Safety" group, expressed his frustration: "After spending thousands of dollars of taxpayer money on staff time and two traffic engineering reports, and after receiving two separate letters from the Moraga-Orinda Fire Department outlining their educated objections to delayed emergency response times, the Town Council elected to reject both the traffic engineers suggestions and the concerns of our fire professionals."

The earliest date on which the issue could be back on the agenda is August 24th.

Late in the night, the Council approved the **Development Impact Fees Ordinance** that was presented at the previous meeting (see our article in the May 28th issue, available on-line at www.lamorindaweekly.com).

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