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Moraga's Mid-Year Budget: A Delicate Balance

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga's Administrative Services Director Joan Streit is always cautious when she presents facts and figures to the Town Council; in the uncertain climate California agencies are working under, caution seems a reasonable approach. At the March 10th Council meeting, she presented a mid-year updated budget on track with previous projections, though prospective revenues have slightly decreased. Streit also offered a sneak-peek at the 2010/2011-budget cycle. All things considered the situation does not

look too catastrophic for Moraga, but according to Streit the Town will have to find additional sources of revenue to compensate for anticipated increases in expenses and decreases in on-going revenues.

"We are experiencing a slightly reduced revenue stream," said Streit, "but our end balance should stay positive." The revised projected general fund revenue for 2009-2010 is now at \$6,225,278 instead of the over \$6,377,000 initially projected, taking the positive balance to \$168,294 for the year. Streit explained that the reduction in revenue

came from declining interest rates as well as less than expected sales tax and vehicle license fee revenue.

"For next year, we anticipate that sales tax revenue may decrease even further, we think that our workers' compensation, health care and PERS expenses will increase, but we do not project any increase in staff salary," said Streit, who recommended that next year the Town will need to continue to manage expenditures and will have to find new sources of revenue.

As the Council examined its different funds, Mayor Ken Chew

was surprised at the very small yield of the Palos Colorados fund, the one time developer fee paid by the company that is developing the Palos Colorados property, which returned only 1% interest for this year. "Could we agree to authorize a more aggressive investment policy?" asked Council Member Mike Metcalf. The Council decided to ask the Audit and Finance Committee to look into this question and propose alternative, safe, but more productive investments. Proposals to increase revenue will be made by staff in the coming months.

Moraga Road's New Slurry Seal Failing

By Sophie Braccini

The new rubber seal, which was applied on Moraga Road to resurface the town's main artery, started chipping and eroding very shortly after it was laid down. This sorry state prompted Town Public Works Director Jill Mercurio to block the acceptance of the project by the Town and urge the contractor, International Surfacing Sys-

tems (ISS), to find a solution. "The product is not what we anticipated," commented a disappointed Mercurio, "and CalTrans informed us that other jurisdictions in the area have had the same problem with the slurry seal." The Director added that staff does not know at this time what caused the problem; either poor material was pro-

vided to ISS or it was not well prepared for application.

The Town's staff is actively working with the contractor to find a solution, but what that might look like has not yet been decided. "Different options include repairs, stripping off the road and resurfacing, or applying another layer of slurry seal," says Mer-

curio, "we need to work with the contractor and the insurance to find a solution that will satisfy the town." Work will have to wait for warmer and dryer weather. In the meantime, the contractor is coming in every couple of weeks to sweep the street to remove the aggregate that has become loose and stripped from the roadway.

Rheem Senior Matinee Hanging by a Thread

By Sophie Braccini

On Wednesday, March 3rd, the first ever classic movie matinee attracted only 30 customers to the Rheem Theatre in Moraga. Disappointed by the turn out, theater owners Jim Sheehan and Tom Peterson decided to cancel the plan to hold such projections every Wednesday. "Tom (Peterson) told me that if 100 people did

not show up at the next presentation, they would not be able to afford to continue," said Chamber of Commerce President Edy Schwartz. So for the second showing, all of Moraga seniors rallied and the theater sold 80 tickets. "We even had people going to the Convalescent Hospital and wheel in patients!" says Schwartz, who also

wanted to acknowledge the campaigning done by the Moraga Movers. "At that level of attendance, they will keep the matinee going," concluded a hopeful Schwartz. The matinees are held at the Rheem Theatre, 350 Park St, Moraga, every Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. in the main theater. Call 988-3411 for more information.

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