

Library Lease and Service Agreement Not a Done Deal

By Sophie Braccini

David Kruegel was angry. The President of the Friends of the Moraga Library, who finds in unacceptable that decisions involving a public service be made without public input, came to the January 12 Town Council meeting to oppose the approval of a new contract that would redefine the relationship between the Town and the Contra Costa County Library system. Kruegel believes that the contract suffers from several shortcomings. The Council, despite

staff's favorable recommendation, opted to table the issue. The agreement, in a nutshell, would assign all of the costs associated with library facilities to the municipalities, while the County Library will provide 35 open hours of library services. The new contract would unify the legal relationship between the Library and the serviced communities. It was crafted by a joint body of library staff and city managers, including Lafayette City Manager Steven Falk.

"It's take it or leave it," said Jill Keimach, Moraga's Town Manager. She explained that the agreement would improve a situation where all the communities operate under different contracts and that it would make library costs more predictable for the town. "Right now we supplement the cost of the service (to offer more open hours to the public) and that cost has been rising sharply," she said, "we will be more in control if we are responsible only for the capital and maintenance

costs of the building." Her conviction could have won the Council's approval, but Kruegel's opinion carries a lot of weight in Moraga when it comes to the library system. The dedication of the Friends of the Moraga Library, their ongoing involvement, and the contributions they make to the programs run by the library, make them partners whose position cannot be overlooked. After Kruegel voiced his disagreement, it was clear that the

Council was not going to sign the contract that night. "The Town owns the building, pays for its maintenance, and the library uses it to provide its services," said Kruegel. "The county does not pay rent to the town, but instead provides services; the problem is that what these services consist of is not described clearly in the contract." Kruegel added that the expenses of the first year were not defined, and that no procedure was identified to resolve disputes. Moraga was the second com-

munity, out of 25, to discuss approval of the contract; the City of Martinez has already signed on. "Other cities may have different views. I don't see an upside to signing this tonight," said Council Member Dave Trotter. The Council asked representatives of the County Library, Real Estate Manager Dick Awenius and Gail McPartland, Deputy County Librarian, to get a consensus from the remaining communities and then come back to Moraga.

Setting Goals

Or, So much to do, so little time

By Sophie Braccini

About 20 residents joined the 12 town officials who convened at 8 a.m. on a Saturday at the Hacienda de las Flores to start setting the goals for the Town of Moraga. Finance Director Emily Boyd confirmed that frugality is keeping the Town's operating budget balanced, but that deferred infrastructure maintenance requires that new sources of income be found. As residents and community groups began to elucidate their ideas, it became clear that four hours would not be enough to prioritize all of the items; the goal-setting meeting will

reconvene on February 9 at 7 p.m. The phrase of the day was Bill Gross's 'New Normal' (recently used by President Barack Obama in a 60 Minutes interview). "The new normal is Moraga," stated Town Manager Jill Keimach, "Moraga has a very stable financial situation, we have always been a minimal government, and we need to continue to appeal to the many volunteers that have kept us lean." Nonetheless, Keimach believes that meager resources should not stop the community from having high expectations. "That's what moti-

vates us," she stated in her opening remarks, "and we will succeed." After Town staff and Mayor Karen Mendoca listed their goals, residents added some new elements. A partial list includes: Claire Roth, speaking on behalf of the Hacienda Foundation, asked that the Town consider tearing down the Casita and rebuilding it as a community meeting room. Dick Olsen, an MOFD board member who spoke as a Moraga resident, asked that the Town work on establishing an emergency response plan. Former mayor Lynda Descham-

bault asked the Town to resume work on the ridgeline and hillside ordinance that was tabled when Measure K was proposed for the November 2008 ballot. Ellen Beans, of the Moraga Citizens Network, wondered why the implementation of the Moraga Specific Plan was not listed. Hollie Lucas-Alcalay asked that an interim plan or retail ordinance be defined for the Rheem Center. For a complete list of goals presented at the January 8th workshop, go to the Town website, www.moraga.ca.us.

Catalonian Sheepdog from Moraga Wins Dog Show



Ranger with owner Dianne Wilson. Photo courtesy Wilson family

It's been a few months now that Ranger has been hanging out at Moraga Royale with his owner, Executive Director Dianne Wilson. She recently entered him in the International All Breed Canine Association (IABCA) show in Santa Rosa. Ranger, to his owner's surprise, took home six 1st place metals, one 2nd place and one 3rd place. He also won "Best in Show Puppy" and "Best in Show Rare Breed." Ranger is a Catalonian Sheepdog from the Catalonian region of Spain. "We were on a long wait list for about a year prior to his birth," says Wilson, "My son flew to Muskegon, Michigan and picked him up when he was 13 weeks old." The Wilsons say that they knew from day one that Ranger was special. He has been a member of their family for a little over five months. "I like watching Dog Shows," says Wilson, "however, Ranger and I had never participated in one prior to that weekend. Winning was a big surprise to me; I don't think Ranger was surprised." S.Braccini



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