



Moraga Civic News

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, August 22, 7:00 pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Monday, August 20, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Design Review

Monday, August 27, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us

Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



Police Report

Drunk pet sitter, 8/09/12 A concerned Merrill Drive family called the police at nearly 2 a.m. to report they heard someone enter through the garage door and was currently making noise in the lower level of the house. Cops found a clearly intoxicated 19-year-old who was a family friend. The fellow believed he was supposed to feed the cats that day and entered the house without the residents' knowledge. Homeowners didn't press charges and offered to let him stay the night to sober up.

Battery, 8/07/12 An Ascot Drive resident was allegedly battered by her boyfriend as the result of an argument. Officers contacted and arrested the subject.

False alarm, 8/05/12 Cops responded to an alarm at a Whitethorne Drive home in the middle of the afternoon. They discovered the front door open with no signs of force, looking through the home they found nothing unusual or suspicious. Police kindly locked the door and went out through the garage. Homeowners returned while cops were leaving and speculated that their son had not locked the door and the wind blew it open. No harm done.

Pot found during traffic stop, 8/05/12 A Nissan sedan was pulled over for a broken rear license plate lamp. When the officer greeted the driver, there was a strong odor of marijuana. Although the motorist didn't think there was any pot in the car, police found less than one ounce in the trunk. Driver didn't have a medicinal cannabis card.

Underage drunk driver, 8/03/12 A Crown Victoria was pulled over in front of 7-11. Upon contact, police noted the 17-year-old driver was on a provisional license and there was a curious odor of alcohol in the air. The young lady also had two friends in the car, ages 19 and 20—a big no-no. Although she only had a blood alcohol level of .011 (.08 is the threshold for drunk driving) she was under the legal drinking age, and she didn't happen to have her provisional license with her. Can you say lost driving privilege?

Honey, I've lost the car, 8/01/12 A 27-year-old woman walked to the 24-Hour Fitness in Moraga at 3:20 a.m. after driving her vehicle off the roadway in an unknown location. Police came from the Sheriff's office, Orinda, Lafayette and Pleasant Hill to locate the car—a Honda CRV. The inebriated woman tried to backtrack her route, with the help of police, from her home in Lafayette—but still couldn't find the car. Thoughtful police took her home and dropped her off in the care of a friend. If you happen to find a CRV in a ditch somewhere in Lamorinda—it just may be hers.

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Moraga Challenges Grand Jury Report

Town is free of CalPERS debt

By Sophie Braccini

The Contra Costa County Grand Jury recently released a report titled, "City Retirement Plans, An Unsustainable Benefit?" with recommendations for local municipalities. This report did not go over well with the Town Council and staff, who were concerned that the Grand Jury made mistakes regarding Moraga's finances and disappointed that it did not take the opportunity to highlight the lean compensation plans that allow Moraga to be CalPERS (California Public

Employees' Retirement System) debt-free to date, a rare achievement.

Town staff prepared a response to the report that was presented to the Town Council by Administrative Services Director Stephanie Hom. "Staff believes that the Grand Jury made a couple of inaccurate and misleading statements," said Hom in her usual measured tone.

In September 2011 the Town of Moraga, like other communities in the county, completed a City Pension

Survey sent by the Grand Jury.

"The Grand Jury went with a preconceived idea," said a very upset Chief of Police Bob Priebe. "They missed a golden opportunity to use the Town of Moraga to show how to do things right, and they need to be corrected."

In its response to the Grand Jury report, staff explains how Moraga compensates its employees, including police, and compares the Town with other local municipalities. Moraga

has consistently reduced employee benefits and pensions and used developer fees to pay CalPERS all of its unfunded pension liabilities in 2007.

"Unfunded pension liabilities nationwide amount to \$2 trillion," said Vice Mayor Howard Harpham. "I'm so pleased that Moraga has no unfunded pension allocation."

The Town's response is available on its web site—interested readers can find it under the Town News tab at moraga.ca.us.

Edric Kwan is Passionate about Roads

By Sophie Braccini



Edric Kwan Photo Ohlen Alexander

Edric Kwan started his new job as Moraga's Public Works Director and Town Engineer July 23. He is vividly aware that the Town's first priority is its roads. Fortunately, Kwan has a lot of experience in this area—as a consultant he conceived pavement reports and designs for many Bay Area cities before going to work for the City of Richmond. "The residents of Moraga deserve good pavement," said Kwan, who is pleased that the Town will have a sales tax on the November ballot to support infrastructure that will open up the possibility of doing some serious rehabilitation work.

"I come from a bigger agency where the work was more compartmentalized," said Kwan. "Here, people seem to work more cooperatively and I am very excited about the challenges ahead."

Kwan takes the helm at Public Works at a time when Moraga's pavement is rated in poor condition and the current capital investment budget is way below what's needed to stop the deterioration. But he has seen many cities, many situations, and studied many different ways to preserve infrastructure.

"It is a balancing act," Kwan explained. "It costs so much more to repair a damaged road than to maintain a good road, that when you have a limited amount of money it might be a better idea to keep up the good ones and let some of the bad ones get worse."

As part of Harris & Associates, Kwan provided pavement management plans for some 13 Bay Area communities, including nearby Piedmont and Pleasanton. "You get the data on the roads and depending on how much money you have available you construct decision trees that lead to different repair scenarios, and decision-making by city councils," explained Kwan. The studies are done using software such as StreetSaver, the one used in Moraga.

"As a consultant, I was also involved in designing and bidding pavement plans," added Kwan. "That's the next level, when testing is done in the field, and plans are prepared and estimated." Kwan did pavement design for Pleasant Hill, among other cities.

"Deciding on a pavement is a technical and political decision that can evolve over time, because

people's priorities change," said Kwan. "Plans need to be periodically re-evaluated and scenarios modified." What does not change is the need for a revenue stream. Kwan is hopeful that residents will support the one percent sales tax when they go to the polls in November.

"If the sales tax passes, the Council could consider a number of options to begin road repair and other work in 2013, including leveraging our revenues to get an influx of funds to do larger road repair projects in the first several years in order to stem our current rate of infrastructure deterioration," said Town Manager Jill Keimach. "All of those types of options and the detailed road repair plan and construction bids will be considered by the Council after the election."

"The sales tax is only one part of the overall solution," added Mayor Mike Metcalf. "It will staunch the bleeding and keep things from getting worse. But we need about \$2 million per year; the sales tax will bring in about half. That's the challenge for Edric (Kwan)."

In the meantime, Kwan will have to work with what is in the budget and possibly grants. "Grants for pavement are limited to arterials and collectors," said Kwan. "Projects have to be shovel-ready in order to take advantage of an opportunity when it arises." In Richmond, Kwan got a grant for the total reconstruction of Carlson Boulevard, a \$4.5 million project.

"I am very proud of the pavement programs in Alameda and Richmond where I was able to work with the community and get good results," concluded Kwan, who has great hopes for Moraga.

Planning Commission Looks at Signs

Subcommittee established to study commercial sign regulation

By Sophie Braccini

Some seven years ago, then Planning Director Lori Salamack held a series of workshops to get the business community's feedback on Moraga's sign ordinance and any amendments that might be needed. It became clear, after a few months of public discussion, that a regulation stipulating that a sign ordinance must be content-neutral was a hurdle that could not be overcome and the amendment process was dropped.

Recently some Moraga businesses took it upon themselves to freshen up the perspective on what's allowed by displaying non-compliant signs. Residents complained and Town staff asked for the removal of the signs.

In order to move the ball forward two local business owners, Grant Stubblefield, of Neighborhood Computers, and Brad Noggle, of 5-A-Rent-A-Space, proposed some changes to the Planning Commission, which decided August 6 to form a subcommittee to study possible amendments to certain elements of the sign ordinance pertaining to business signs.

Moraga Planning Director

Shawna Brekke-Read indicated that her department received six to eight complaints from residents last month after businesses put up very visible, temporary signs, mostly along Moraga Road, which is designated a scenic corridor. When asked to remove the signs, business owners complained that the Town's ordinance makes it very costly to make a com-

pliant sign and that it is hard to attract customers without signage.

Noggle and Stubblefield took the initiative to meet with staff and start drafting an amendment that would allow the display of temporary signs during business hours.

"Businesses would pay a \$500 annual fee for signs that could be up eight hours per day," proposed Stub-

blefield. "An administrative process would allow firms to place temporary signs on private properties along the scenic corridor. Staff would have to approve the signs that would not be limited in height to 16 feet." He added that this was an exploratory effort to find a solution.

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