

Civic News Moraga

Moraga's Plan for the Adobe Takes Shape

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Town Council has a plan to save the Joaquin Moraga Adobe from becoming a private club house for 13 homeowners, wanting it preserved as a historical treasure that is open to the public for educational purposes. Trouble is, the Adobe is in Orinda—so last week the Town Council sent a letter to the City of Orinda.

The Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe (FJMA) recently appealed the Orinda Planning Commission's approval of the development of the Adobe property; the appeal will be heard by the Orinda City Council in January.

Introducing the agenda item at the council's Nov. 14 meeting, Town Manager Jill Keimach said that Moraga was respectful of Orinda's process and that the letter was an effort to start a discussion while proposing very specific strategies aimed at preserving the Adobe as a historical site. The staff report reads in part, "The first goal is to provide public access to the Adobe structure in order to educate and showcase the Adobe structure as it was initially built in 1841, in conformance with the Historical/Cultural Resources Study by the Architectural Resources Group." The second goal is to preserve the view from the Adobe's porch.

The council believes the best solution is for FJMA to purchase both the Adobe and Lot 12, a piece of land where the developer plans to build a house that would, according to FJMA, annihilate the panoramic view

from the Adobe's porch—the view that drew Joaquin Moraga and his family to that location in the first place. FJMA would restore and maintain the building as a museum, with help from the Moraga Historical Society. Many cited the Sonsara development across the street and to the north with its large greenery buffer between the homes and the street. "This is not Sonsara," said Kerr, "this is multifamily housing. But we propose to create a large green space along Moraga Way, with a meandering path, comparable to what the country club has done."

Certain elements particularly appealed to the commissioners, such as the fact that the project will be LEED Gold, with solar panels providing energy to the homes, and a proposed trail along the creek that borders part of the development. They asked for some modifications such as additional guest parking, a play area for kids, and not allowing access to the development directly from Moraga Way to mitigate traffic impacts.

The project will come back to the Planning Commission and Design Review Board for final approval. If it is determined to be compliant with the Moraga Center Specific Plan, no Environmental Impact Review will be required. This is the third high-density housing project that the Planning Department has been actively working on in recent months; the MCSP projects the eventual construction of 700 new housing units in the downtown area.

Moraga School District Issues Public Apology

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"We (are also) sorry about our initial response to one lawsuit. We made a terrible mistake by including two defenses that were entirely inappropriate. We never believed that the victims in these cases bear any responsibility for the abuse they suffered. We are committed to making sure it cannot happen again.

"Insuring the safety of our children will become the cornerstone of all the work we do, as long as we are a district," MacNulty concluded. He introduced the members of the Student Safety Committee, created by the district at the end of last school year and comprised of parents and district staff, who presented the results of their work.

Parent and committee member Jim Obsitnik outlined the training staff would go through twice a year regarding children's safety and mandatory reporting. Rebecca Eirich reported on information the district is providing to parents through its website and conferences, and on the search for adequate curriculum to empower children. It was also indicated that the committee would discuss possible barriers to reporting with teachers and staff.

The district is proposing to sanction staff members who do not report suspicion of abuse by noting in a former employee's personnel file that he or she should not be rehired.

Ryan Cunnane, Kristin's brother-in-law, told the school board, "You cannot change the past, it is the student today and the student of tomorrow who need your help, make sure they're protected. The only way to do it is to investigate how Correa and Witters (the two abusive teachers) were able to hide in the open, how they slipped through the cracks, who knew what when." He concluded by saying that his family, knowing the pain that comes from abuse, would do anything to make sure it never happens again.

When asked after the meeting why the district had not offered an apology sooner, Burns replied that dealing with litigation was challenging and can occupy the full focus of a board or any defendant. "The statement Charles (MacNulty) read was from our hearts and I hope it wasn't diminished for not having come immediately in what has been a difficult process," he said.

Dexter Louie Resigns from School Board

Just days after being re-elected to the Moraga School Board, Dr. Dexter Louie resigned his position. In a recent interview with *Lamorinda Weekly*, Louie indicated that his decision to resign was linked to the developments in the sexual abuse scandal. "There were so many complex issues, and I can't disclose a great deal because of the pending litigation and privacy concerns," he said. "I thought about not running again, but Mr. (Dennis) Kelleher had already indicated he was not running for re-election, and I felt experience was needed on the board." Louie wouldn't say what changed between the time he decided to run again and the time he resigned. He was aware of the Cunnane suit when he decided to run, "and the newspapers said she was at Campolindo (which is in a different school district) when the Correa abuse occurred," he said.

Recently two new, anonymous, plaintiffs came forward to accuse the district of negligence. "I have done nothing wrong," affirmed Louie. "I want to thank all those who have supported and trusted me all these years. The day after the election, I had a talk with Mr. Charles MacNulty, the vice president of the board. Later that day I made a very difficult decision, I believe the right decision for the district, to resign. It was a very painful decision, and my reasons were very personal. At some point, I hope I will be able to explain further." Louie added he loved serving on the board for 14 years and had hoped to serve one more term.

At the Nov. 13 meeting, Superintendent Bruce Burns indicated that the board would soon decide on a procedure to replace the seat left vacant by Louie's resignation. It could decide to either appoint someone or convene a special election. Three members of the community asked that Parker Colvin, who came in third place in the recent election, be appointed to the board.

A Town Reflects



Mayor Mike Metcalf presents the proclamation to Ryan Andresen. Photo Mina Lucacher

An unusual wave of emotion swept over the Moraga Town Council Nov. 14 as it presented 18-year-old Ryan Andresen with an official proclamation honoring him for the anti-bullying Tolerance Wall he installed at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School.

The council often recognizes residents or groups and it is customary for the public and council members to comment. The acts of the young man standing before them, who appeared happy and moved to be so appreciated, touched every commentator; each talked about personal challenges and suffering, recognizing the fabric that weaves us all together in our strengths, weaknesses, and regrets. The 288 tiles of the Tolerance Wall were made by students, teachers and staff. *S.Braccini*

State of the Town



Mayor Mike Metcalf recently presented the annual State of the Town address to a large crowd gathered at the Moraga Country Club. There were no surprises. Metcalf said that last year's big concern was roads—how to fix them and where to find the money to pay for it—and next year's first task will be to implement the road repair plan made possible by voter approval of Measure K. The event also featured recognition of the many volunteers serving on town boards, committees and commissions. *S.Braccini*

Photo Mina Lucacher

WE HAVE MOVED!

Lafayette Boy Scout Troop 224's Annual Christmas Tree Lot

New location on Mt. Diablo Boulevard
between Oakwood and the Reservoir
next to the Lafayette Community Gardens

Opens Fri., Nov. 23rd at 12pm
then daily from 9am to 9pm

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