

Civic News Moraga

Soul Searching for the Sports Facility Subcommittee

By Sophie Braccini

The Joint Ad Hoc Facilities Planning Subcommittee is a large, 12-member body that includes representatives from Saint Mary's College, the Moraga School District and Campolindo High School, town staff and elected officials, and the Moraga Sports Alliance. They meet with a similar objective: to provide residents with the sports and recreation facilities they need. But as users, landowners and administrators they have different perspectives, and during their third monthly meeting April 7 there were times when they didn't seem to hear what each other had to say. Progress was made nonetheless as the subcommittee continued to seek better ways to use existing recreation facilities, define a common vision of recreation in Moraga and identify the responsibilities each stakeholder will carry.

The meeting started with participants listing what they were expecting from the process. All indicated their desire to work collaboratively to better serve the recreation needs of residents. On the agenda was a discussion of the establishment of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) for shared use of facilities.

When that discussion started, differences between participants surfaced.

Subcommittee vice chair Chris Maher, of the Moraga Sports Alliance, said that before MOUs are signed a structure should be put in place that would coordinate needs and administer the availability of fields and facilities. "We need a permanent group that does this," he said. Moraga's town manager, Jill Keimach, was in the audience and suggested that field owners get together to create a calendar. She tasked Jay Ingram, parks and recreation director, with the responsibility of putting it together. She also called for a long range vision.

Moraga School District governing board member Shari Simon also resisted discussing MOUs first. "What is it that we are trying to create and achieve?" she asked. She proposed a creative process in order to get a common vision. "MOUs are to be signed once the projects are defined," she added.

Councilmember Dave Trotter insisted that MOUs should be discussed separately now to better use what is available. He suggested bilateral conversations between the five entities

that have a stake in local sports and recreation.

The need expressed by the Sports Alliance was for more open fields, something they believe could be accommodated in the relative short term at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School if a partnership with the school district is established. Simon reminded the group that the cost and responsibility to maintain infrastructure also needs to be taken into account, and school board member Charles McNulty insisted that the district's current facilities are adequate for its needs, the district's first duty is to educate children, and its budget is tight enough as it is.

Since Moraga is likely to be getting money from the Palos Colorados Development (see sidebar), staff and elected officials are thinking about possible new public facilities such as a gymnasium, a community center or a swimming pool, that could be funded by the town; in partnership with other stakeholders, or not.

Resident Edy Schwartz asked that other recreation users be not forgotten by the discussion group and the plan for sports and recreation facilities should be geared to

users from 3 to 99 years old.

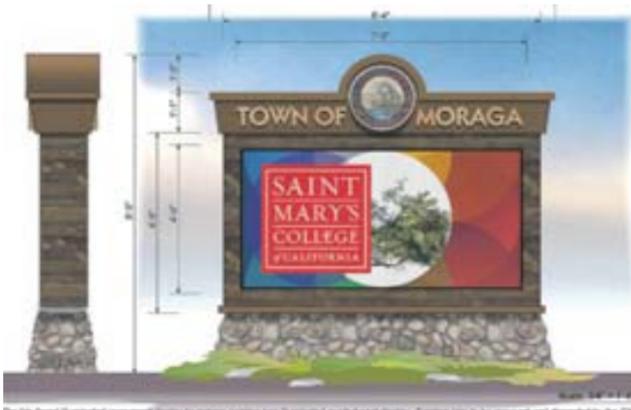
Since the town owns very little flat land and often has to rent facilities from the school district for its recreation offerings, staff is trying to find options on its own properties. Ingram presented a proposal for a multi-field facility on the "back-forty" (an area at the back of the Moraga Commons Park that is little used) – a 166 by 135-foot building that would house two full size basketball courts or four volleyball courts. The project, a steel frame on a concrete slab, is in a very preliminary study phase; many issues need to be resolved, such as parking and ADA access.

The next meeting of the subcommittee is scheduled for 7 p.m. on May 5 at the Hacienda de las Flores.

The Palos Colorados development project that seems to have been going nowhere fast is, according to planning staff, starting to move forward again. The town expects that grading will begin next year for 120-home project. Once the developer obtains the grading permit, the town will receive \$2.25 million within 30 days and an additional \$3.5 million within 120 days; the conditions of approval include up to \$3 million for the town when the homes are built.

Town Council Opts for Electronic Sign

By Sophie Braccini



Design proposal by AdArt

provided

The Town Council recently selected a new electronic sign to replace the old community message board on Moraga Road across from the Commons Park. Hopeful that the new high-tech board could be in use this summer, council members were disappointed to hear that they should expect it for the summer of 2015. Design review and electrical work are likely to add months to the process.

The message board the council chose, proposed by AdArt, will be the same size as the current one – but any similarities end there. Town staff

must manually change the letters, one by one, on each side of the old sign; messages will be sent to the new sign electronically, within seconds, and will change at time intervals determined by staff.

"If there is an emergency, your police department will be able to immediately display information for residents," said the AdArt representative. "The sign can hold more messages than you will ever need, and you will define the time each message will be displayed."

The next step is for staff to bring

the proposed sign to the Design Review Board for approval. The board will have to determine if the electronic display complies with the town's new sign ordinance.

But first, that new sign ordinance must be approved.

If the message board is found compliant, staff will create a usage policy and the Town Council will approve the purchase. It will take two or three months for PG&E to provide the town with the necessary electric resources.

The sign is priced at approximately \$60,000. The source of funding is a non-restricted Comcast grant the town has not spent yet.

The cost to community groups to display a message for a week is currently \$60. Moraga Valley Kiwanis member Barry Behr told the council he was hoping the cost would remain the same.

Moraga Citizen of the Year



Cliff Dochterman has been named Moraga's 2014 Citizen of the Year. He was chosen, from among a list of people nominated by Moraga residents, by a panel that included representatives of the Moraga Valley Kiwanis, Contra Costa Times, Lamorinda Weekly, the Chamber of Commerce, Saint Mary's College and the 2013 Citizen of the Year, Dick Olsen. Dochterman's many achievements, including his role as the world president of Rotary International, were decisive factors. The award banquet will begin at 6 p.m. on Friday, May 2 at the Saint Mary's College Soda Center. Tickets are \$45 and can be ordered from Kathe Nelson at the Chamber of Commerce, email Kathe@MoragaChamber.org or call (925) 323-6524. S. Braccini

Community-Wide Garage Sale in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini



Inspired by the beautiful weather and the spirit of spring cleaning, Clinton Calkins, of Moraga's Parks and Recreation department, wants Moraga residents to clear out their garages and closets, set up their folding tables and participate in a community-wide garage sale from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 17.

Most Lamorindans are familiar with kitchen and garden tours; think of this event as a garage sale tour. For \$15, you can register your garage sale with Parks and Recreation and your location will be added to the Community Garage Sale Guide.

The nominal fee is to cover "the communication and advertising that we are doing to promote the event," and the cost of printing the guides, explains Calkins.

Sales of all sizes are welcome – single-family garage sales, block sales and community group sales, such as the sale being organized by the Moraga Women's Society. "We are taking the opportunity to get rid of some stuff that has accumulated over years

of marriage," smiles Rachel Riddle, the organization's president. Members will contribute treasures to be sold at her home in the Camino Ricardo neighborhood. "The money we raise at the garage sale will go to the schools, the library and other service projects," explains member Nancy Compelli.

Riddle anticipates that her garage, driveway and front lawn will be entirely occupied by the items roughly 30 members will bring. "One woman is downsizing and has a lot of interesting furniture, another has promised to bring an antique cast iron stove," she says.

"We hope this will also be a community building event," says Calkins, who reports that 10 sales have already been registered. You can add your garage sale online at www.moraga.ca.us – under Quick Links click on Register for Classes; or call Calkins at (925) 888-7036. The registration deadline is May 4.

Garage sale guides, including location maps, will be available May 14 for download at www.moraga.ca.us/dept/park-rec/community-garage-sale, or pick up at the town offices, 329 Rheim Blvd.; the Moraga library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd., and the Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Drive.

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