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## Town and MSD To Share Facilities At No Cost

*By Sophie Braccini*

The history between the Town of Moraga and the Moraga School District has not always been one of a cooperative nature. In spite of joint projects such as the town restoring the Camino Pablo playing field, the two agencies sometimes behaved like competing entities, charging each other heavy fees for the use of each other's facilities.

But that's all changing. MSD Superintendent Bruce Burns, along with town staff and council members, will now will share their facilities at no cost for the benefit of the residents.

"The winner is the community," said Jay Ingram of the town's parks and recreation department when he presented to the town council in May the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) that the two entities have now adopted.

Ingram recalls how over the past decade the district and the town established and regularly increased rental fees, instituted reservation restrictions and charged commercial rate fees to each other. For example, one of the justifications to construct new Town Chambers at 335 Rheem was the fee the town was charged by the school district to use the middle school's auditorium for its council meetings.

The bigger impact will be on the parks and recreation department and its ability to offer sports activities. The 2007 Parks and Recreation Master Plan states that Moraga residents are underserved with community center facilities and park acreage as compared to other local jurisdictions and national standards. This is the reason why an ad hoc Joint Facilities Planning Subcommittee was created in 2014, with representatives of the town, schools and groups of facilities users.

The committee recommended as a first step the discussion of MOUs between the town, Saint Mary's College, MSD and Acalanes Union High School District. AUHSD expressed no interest in sharing facilities, but the town recently signed an MOU with the college; then it was the local school district's time.

"It is a win-win," said Ingram who knows that the town will now be more competitive; the high rental cost restricted the recreation department's options to using only the two public parks for sports classes. The capacity and amenities of both the Commons and Rancho Laguna parks limit dramatically what the town could offer.

When the MSD board discussed the topic, Burns defended the MOU saying that the spirit of the agreement is to make facilities available to the public, without the barrier of discouraging fees.

"This is a positive step," he said reassuring his board that reasonable service or operational fees will still be charged if the use generates an expense to the district, such as custodial service.

By the same token, the town will be able to use the four schools facilities and the district can now use town facilities at no cost. This includes the Hacienda de las Flores, the two public parks, the community meeting room, and the electronic community sign.

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