

Town council reacts to proposed MOFD fire code



This landscaping will pass inspection

Photo provided

By Nick Marnell

Fire Chief Dave Winnacker brought his road show to the Moraga Town Council Feb. 26 as he presented highlights of a proposed fire code that the chief hopes to become effective in time for the 2020 fire season.

Winnacker explained that the proposed code confronts the 21st-century reality of frequent and savage wildfires that have roared through California the past few years. He called the updated code a logical response to that phenomena, similar to how communities adjusted their landscaping after many years of drought. "Semirural means overgrown," the Moraga-Orinda Fire District chief said of the character of the community. "We have to make changes to our landscape."

The council members and a handful of town residents pushed back against many of the same issues that had arisen during previous public meetings, though unlike at the Orinda council meeting, no major concern arose over the chief's proposed code designation of the district as a Wildland Urban Interface (see story on page A1).

"It is for the purpose of developing more restrictive building codes for construction," Winnacker said. "Noth-

ing about this will change insurance rates or coverage."

However, the fire code requirement for a 2-foot air gap between the ground and within 2 feet of structures, and the ban on the use of combustible materials – including mulch – within 2 feet of a structure, raised alarms. "I think you have highly underestimated the cost of implementing this," a resident said, while Council Member Roger Wykle warned of trouble down the road if there was no outreach and education regarding those requirements. "We're sure going to hear about this when it is adopted," Wykle said of the fire code.

The requirement of a fire inspection for real property transfers irked Council Member Renata Sos, complaining that it would add an extra step to a real estate transaction. Other topics broached included the cost of adding sprinkler systems and how the new code complied with the California Environmental Quality Act. "We shouldn't be imposing CEQA requirements on our residents," Mayor Kimberleigh Korpus said.

But the overall tone from the council members rang positive. "You're never going to be able to please everybody," Council Member Steve Woehleke said. "This is a reasonable proposal, and it's better than not doing something."

Korpus agreed. "I think we have to do it, and you have my support," she told the chief.

After any adjustments, the proposed code will come back to the council for approval, likely in March or April.

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Nominate a 2020 Moraga Citizen of the Year

It's time to nominate a person you think should be Moraga's 2020 "Citizen of the Year".

This year's Selection Committee consists of 2019 Citizen of the Year Fred Weil and representatives from the event's four sponsors: The Lamorinda Weekly; The Moraga Chamber of Commerce; Saint Mary's College and the Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley.

The basic criteria for selecting this year's Citizen of the Year are:

1. The nominee should have given of their time, talent and energy to help make Moraga a vibrant community – one where people want to live, work and shop;
2. The nominee's body of work should have helped to bring our community together and made us proud to be Moraga residents;
3. Please include specific examples of your nominee's contributions to Moraga.
4. Nominees must reside in Moraga. Paid public officials, current members of the Moraga Town Council and other current elected officials are not eligible;

Email your nominations to nominations@lamorindaweekly.com or send them to: "Moraga Citizen of the Year Nominations", Lamorinda Weekly, PO box 6133, Moraga CA 94556.

An optional, directly downloadable, easy-to-fill-in Nomination Form is at: <http://bit.ly/2020Moraga>

The deadline for receiving nominations is March 25.

The celebratory dinner honoring this year's Citizen of the Year will be held on Saturday, May 2 at Saint Mary's College Soda Center.



Town Council

Wednesday, March 11, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Planning Commission: Monday, March 16, 7 p.m.

Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.
Park and Recreation Commission: Tuesday, March 17, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.
Moraga School District Board Meetings: Thursday, March 10, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium, 1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us. See also AUHSD meeting page A2



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