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## Moraga hires new senior civil engineer



Photo provided

**Moraga Senior Civil Engineer Bret Swain**

**By Vera Kochan**

The town has hired Senior Civil Engineer Bret Swain to fill the position previously held by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp.

Swain began his duties June 15 and has jumped right into Capital Improvement Program projects such as the Hacienda de las Flores ADA restroom and concrete pathways, and the Laguna Creek Restoration Project.

With 22 years of engineering and project management experience along with bachelor degrees in physical and soil science from Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo; a master's in civil en-

gineering from Fresno State University; and an MBA in finance/management from UC Davis, Swain is also registered as a Professional Civil Engineer; a Land Surveyor in Training; and holds a variety of other certificates. "I feel that the better I know my trade, the better and more efficiently I can address the needs of the community I serve, and I strive to keep learning."

Most recently Swain held positions with the cities of Manteca and East Palo Alto. While the distance between those locations and Moraga are poles apart, locale played a big role in his decision to work for the town. "Moraga is much closer to my home in northwest Dublin," explained Swain. His wife was uncomfortable with his long commute times.

When asked what the similarities and differences are between Moraga and his previous work experiences, Swain replied, "While there are some scope and scale differences, there are substantial similarities in the type of work and the issues to be resolved that I did in East Palo Alto. While in Manteca, I worked mainly utilities, primarily for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The experience garnered overseeing large programmatic master planning, design and construction activities provided some

insights that can be applied across many engineering activities."

Some of Swain's prior work history will come in handy for Moraga's purposes. He has prepared CIP projects and budget reviews for stormwater programs; prepared and presented reports to city councils and commissions; managed large construction projects involving planning and financing through CEQA; sought funding for CIP projects; had public interaction regarding engineering projects; prepared construction contracts and managed bidding processes to name a few.

Swain is looking forward to meeting the town's needs and prioritizing them in order "to achieve the greatest 'bang for the buck' as it were." He gives kudos to the town staff and the local tri-city governments. "The Lamorinda teaming efforts really seem to have a very collaborative approach in the way they work together, which can promote greater productivity and efficiencies benefiting their communities." Swain added, "There are numerous opportunities for growth in Moraga. Moraga has some real opportunities to creatively resolve technical issues to the benefit of the community."

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## SMC opts for mainly remote fall instruction

**By Vera Kochan**

Unlike the California State University system which announced a predominantly remote instruction format in May or the University of California system in which announcements were each made independently of each other and primarily in July, Moraga's Saint Mary's College made an official announcement to its students on Aug. 3.

SMC had high hopes back in May that it would be able to conduct in-person courses in the fall. Unlike much larger college campuses, trimming class sizes and reducing the number of occupants in on-campus housing facilities was a distinct and not impossible scenario. However, the resurgence of positive coronavirus cases globally dashed any hopes for a semblance of normalcy and business as usual.


Like many campuses across the country SMC faculty, staff and a COVID-19 Response Group monitored the pandemic situation. According to a statement from SMC President James Donahue, "We have developed robust health and safety protocols including screening, testing, and contact tracing capabilities; redesigned classrooms and campus spaces to take advantage of our unique natural and built environment; adopted intensive cleaning and sanitizing procedures; and developed plans to offer our fall classes in a mix of instructional modes, including in-person, hybrid and online."

On-campus student housing has seen its capacity cut by half to help enforce social distancing. Every resident will have their own bedroom with priority assignment of the 868 single-occupancy rooms provided to first-year students, High Potential Program students, international students, Pell-eligible students, students requiring on-campus disability accommodations, students requiring on-campus courses with no remote options, and students who are experiencing housing insecurity and/or technology constraints.

The entire fall semester of courses will be conducted remotely with the exception of some in-person and hybrid classes for undergraduates living on campus doing research and lab work. Studio, performance-based and seminar courses will also fall into the exception category.

"We will be making use of newly-developed outdoor classroom spaces and non-traditional classrooms to the extent feasible for those classes," stated Donahue, adding, "and will identify on-campus spaces for residential students to study and participate in remote courses."

Faculty, staff and students will be expected to wear a mask, maintain a 6-foot distance and follow other safety protocols as directed by SMC. The college is in the process of developing a policy for any visitors and guests wanting to visit the campus. The new fall term is scheduled to begin Aug. 31.



**Town Council**  
Wednesday, Aug. 26, 7 p.m.  
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

**Planning Commission:** Monday, Aug. 24, 7 p.m.  
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

**Park and Recreation Commission:** Tuesday, Sept. 15 7 p.m., Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

**Moraga School District Board Meetings:**  
Special Board Meeting, Tuesday, Sept. 8, 6 p.m.  
www.moraga.k12.ca.us. See also AUHSD meeting page A2

## PUBLIC MEETINGS ON THE MORAGA CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN ZONING PROJECT SCHEDULED



**The Town has scheduled two Town Hall meetings, an in-person meeting on September 1 and a Zoom webinar on September 2, to discuss implementation of the Moraga Center Specific Plan with the community**

**MORAGA, CA** - The Moraga Center Specific Plan (MCSP) zoning implementation project continues the 20-year plus planning process for the Moraga Center area. During the summer and fall of 2019, a 35-member Citizens Advisory Committee met four times and provided input on the zoning implementation project which is now before the Planning Commission and is scheduled to be heard by the Town Council later this calendar year. Public input is welcome and encouraged at the Planning Commission and Town Council meetings. Additional opportunities for the public to ask questions and provide input into the process have been planned. Given the current shelter-in-place order, two different kinds of public meetings are scheduled prior to the Town Council taking action on the proposed zoning.

- On Tuesday, September 1 at 5:00 p.m., a Town Hall meeting to discuss the MCSP will be held outside at the Hacienda de las Flores at 2100 Donald Drive. Town staff as well as the Fire Chief will be available to answer your questions and hear your input. To comply with the County Health Officer's order, all attendees will be required to wear a mask and maintain 6-foot separation. Attendance will be limited to 50 individuals.
- On Wednesday, September 2 at 6:00 p.m., a Zoom webinar will be held on the same topic in a similar format with the same speakers. The webinar will enable public input. For more information, email Planning@moraga.ca.us or go to the Town's website www.Moraga.ca.us. The webinar will also be available via Livestream.

The adoption of the proposed zoning does not directly result in development. A developer must submit an application to the Town for a project, and each application must go through the Planning Commission/Town Council review process. The proposed zoning includes the maximum development

potential; however, the property owner(s)/ developers will consider market conditions when proposing development. At this time, the Town has not received a formal or preliminary application for any development project in the Moraga Center area.

The community's vision for the Moraga Center as a focal point and pedestrian-oriented activity center with higher density housing and mixed uses was defined in the Town's General Plan adopted in 2002 following a three-year public process. Work on the Moraga Center Specific Plan began in 2003 and included seven years of robust public input and analysis culminating in the adoption of the Moraga Center Specific Plan. In 2010, the Town adopted a new Residential R-20 Zoning District that applies to a portion of the MCSP area and allows for 20 residential dwelling units per acre or 30 Senior Housing residential dwelling units per acre. In January 2015, after outreach and public engagement, the Town adopted the 2015-2023 Housing Element that continues the General Plan vision of higher density housing in the MCSP area to maximize opportunity for the development of housing to accommodate anticipated growth and meet the State's Regional Housing Needs Allocation.

The California Government Code requires internal consistency in the General Plan, Specific Plans and zoning code. Inconsistencies in the MCSP and current zoning has created challenges for the Planning Commission and Town Council when considering development. Between 2015 and 2017, the Town worked to implement the remaining MCSP zoning, but was unable to finish due to lack of funds. Alignment of the Town's adopted plans with the zoning code is a high priority Council goal. The MCSP zoning implementation project has been impacted by recent State laws that encourage the development of more housing in response to the housing crisis. These laws, such as SB 35 and SB 330, have limited local jurisdictions' land use authority thereby impacting the Town's ability to limit development in the MCSP area and reduce the densities and other development standards adopted already in the 2010 MCSP.