



MORAGA

See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
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Moraga seeks to reinstate Tree City USA status



Photo Vera Kochan

Trees-a-plenty grow colorfully in Moraga Commons Park

By Vera Kochan

Having been a Tree City USA member in 2008, 2009, 2014, 2015 and 2016, the town of Moraga is poised to once again apply to the program thanks to the support gained during the

town council's Nov. 18 meeting. Citing fiscal emergencies between 2017-2019, the town had to redirect its tree assessments, documentation efforts and manpower in other directions. There is no fiscal impact to submit an application.

The Beautification and Tree Planting Program Implementation Committee was responsible for the initial 2008 recognition which applies only to trees located in town-owned parks and parcels. Although, it is evident that residents have done their fair share to help beautify Moraga with a wide variety of plantings.

Tree City USA was established in 1976, and is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation. It is administered by the United States Forest Service and National Association of State Foresters. A nationwide program, it has admitted over 3,500 cities under its umbrella. In 2019, 146 California communities were recognized as a Tree City. The state's program is administered by the CAL Fire Urban and Community Forestry Department.

According to the Arbor Day Foundation, benefits to joining the program include: reduces costs for energy,

stormwater management and erosion control; savings in energy consumption by up to 25%; boosts property values; creates stronger ties within neighborhoods and community pride; urban forest management triggers improved ordinances and innovative programs; educates residents about the importance of sustainable tree management; and gains publicity and recognition for a Tree City member.

Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt stated that there are four standards to achieve Tree City USA recognition. First, there must be a tree board or department. The Parks and Recreation Department would oversee the tree program while utilizing two on-call arborists, when needed, to assist park maintenance workers.


Secondly, all cities must have a Tree Care Ordinance. Moraga currently has several such ordinances in place re-

garding care, maintenance, removal and replacement.

In addition, each city must have an annual \$2 per capita Community Forestry Program budget. The town's annual Parks and Open Space Budget is \$417,300, of which \$93,960 is slated for tree maintenance (planting, pruning and removal). This figure comes to \$5.33 per capita based on Moraga's 17,630 residents.

Lastly, each city must have an Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation. The town's most recent Arbor Day Proclamation was in 2015. The Pear and Wine Festival's annual tree planting ceremony will help meet the requirement.

"I think the Tree City program aligns with a lot of the values reflected in town policies in the community," said Brandt. "So much of Moraga is our excellent parks and our iconic green hills. The tree is very symbolic of that."

 **Town Council** Wednesday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Planning Commission: TBA
Park and Recreation Commission: Tuesday, Dec. 15, 7 p.m.,
Moraga School District Board Meetings: Special Board Meeting Tuesday, Dec. 15, 6 p.m.
www.moraga.k12.ca.us See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Holiday Tree lights up Moraga Commons Park



Photo Vera Kochan

Moraga's Holiday Tree adds much needed cheer to the season.

By Vera Kochan

For the sake of poetic license, one can liken COVID-19 to The Grinch during this time of year. So many annual holiday traditions have either been canceled or reconfigured in order to curb the recent explo-

sive up-tick in positive cases. However, Moraga's Parks and Recreation Department is the town's own Cindy-Lou Who, continuing to find ways to keep the holiday spirit from being snatched away by The Grinch.

The Holiday Tree at Com-

mons Park is once again shining bright with its multi-colored lights acting as beacons of hope and joy to a pandemic-weary community. This year there was no fanfare or celebration before the initial lighting ceremony. No masses of families to enjoy hot cocoa served by Santa's elves; no carolers singing classic holiday songs to the crowd; and saddest of all, in order to stay safe before his big trip around the globe on Christmas Eve, Santa stayed home at the North Pole to shelter-in-place with Mrs. Claus.

Fear not Moraga, The Grinch may have caused a setback to the usual way the town celebrates the lighting of the Holiday Tree, but he hasn't taken away our spirit. Like the Whos down in Whoville, residents have noticed the festive lights beckoning them to stand around the tree (6-feet apart, please) and bask in the wonder of the season.

For anyone wishing to contribute to the Buy-A-Bulb fundraising goal of \$6,000, donate online at www.moraga.ca.us or send a check made payable to the Town of Moraga, Attn: Buy-a-Bulb, 2100 Donald Drive, Moraga, CA 94556.

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Santa is making his list, and checking it twice

By Vera Kochan

For the first time ever, Santa's elves, with the help of the Moraga Parks and Recreation Department, have placed a bright red North Pole Mailbox in Moraga Commons Park just waiting to be filled with letters from kids to Santa. The mailbox is located near the giant Holiday Tree by the playground.

Santa wants each child to let him know what they'd like for Christmas, and he would like everyone to tell him a little bit about themselves. But, the magic doesn't stop there. Those children who mail a letter (in an envelope) to Santa, and include a return address, will receive a reply letter a few days before Christmas.

Santa expects to hear from 250 Lamorinda children this year, and he wants to remind everyone that the deadline to mail a letter to Santa is Dec. 17. At the stroke of 5 p.m., his most trusted elves will come out of hiding and whisk the mailbox back to the North Pole. Ho-Ho-Ho!!!



Photo Vera Kochan

Letters to Santa Mailbox stands ready to transport correspondence to the North Pole.


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