



MORAGA

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Chamber of Commerce:
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Town agrees to reformatted Wedgewood Weddings lease agreement

By Vera Kochan

Issues concerning some aspects of the lease agreement with Wedgewood Weddings, previously discussed during the June 9 town council meeting, sent staff back to the proverbial drawing board to make adjustments that were more beneficial to Moraga and its residents. Major concerns involved the term length of the agreement, lack of advanced warning to nearby neighbors, assignment provi-

sions, and noise levels. According to Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt's latest presentation during the June 23 council meeting, "The initial term lease was for 10 years, with two options to extend for an additional five years each. The extension options have been revised to enable the tenant to initiate the request to extend the lease at year eight of the initial 10-year period." If Wedgewood meets all provisions of the lease agreement, such as not defaulting on payments, being good custodians of the property called Hacienda de las Flores located at 2100 Donald Drive, and being a good neighbor, then the town would approve either of the five-year extension periods.

Community outreach involved sending an informational letter that was mailed to 145 residents within a 500-foot vicinity of the Hacienda informing recipients of the potential lease agreement, along with links to pertinent information from past meetings and town staff contact information.

The Assignment Provision was revised to ensure that operations continue as originally agreed, with a family-operated business model, in the event of any potential transfers or sales on Wedgewood's part.

Once again, noise levels were addressed by staff. "Given the additional research and results of the noise simulation exercise, the maximum decibel level has been reduced from 80 dB to 75 dB." Brandt's report continues, "Staff maintains that the presence of an on-site event operator will ensure consistent management of the music and noise on the property. Currently, the town has limited ability to control noise as there is no staff on site. Current operations rely upon the event host's adherence to the noise restrictions and neighbor complaints."

Those complaints were once again vocalized during the Public Comment portion of the meeting. Neighbors to the Hacienda expressed their anger at the consistently loud music during evening events, which some felt has gotten



The Hacienda prepares for a wedding

Photo provided

progressively worse over the last five years. One resident mentioned having emailed Wedgewood twice with questions and received no response to date.

With regards to addressing all of the worries concerning the continuation of excessive noise under a Wedgewood managed venue, Council Member David Stromberg responded, "The facility that the town owns is intended to be used in the manner that it has been and will continue to be under Wedgewood - holding affairs, weddings, other kinds of affairs. We are not going to stop having affairs at the Hacienda. I'm sorry that you have had your personal lives interfered with by DJs who were irresponsible in the past."

Stromberg went on to say that the town council is responsible for looking for ways to generate revenue for Moraga and that this new arrangement with Wedgewood will help do that.

Speaking in general Stromberg continued, "When you bought your home and you knew that it was located in close proximity to the Hacienda, you bought your home with the knowledge that it was used for weddings, and weddings have music. If you buy a house near the Soda Aquatic Center, do you have the right

to say that they shouldn't have swim meets there? If you buy a home near the Campo football field, do you have a right to say you're not allowed to have football games Friday night there?"

"The best you can expect and ask for is that someone take reasonable charge to keep within a realm of tolerance the interference that you will be subjected to during the term of ownership of your houses."

A new provision to the lease requires an initial capital investment in the property from Wedgewood in the amount of \$253,000. Additionally, the town will be able to reallocate Parks and Rec staff to develop new revenue generating programs and work on special projects, rather than spend their time on event planning, when the lease takes effect on Nov. 1.

With the established base rent per month of \$20,000 and Wedgewood's contribution of \$48,000 annually toward the capital investment fund for the property commencing 2024, the town council voted unanimously to adopt a resolution authorizing the town manager to enter into an initial 10-year lease agreement with Wedgewood Weddings for exclusive event and wedding management of the Hacienda.

Moraga Garden Center is saying Goodbye

Moraga Garden Center will be closing on October 31, 2021. I would like to thank all of our customers for their patronage over the years. I have enjoyed the people as much as the plants, and many of my customers have become my friends.

It's a shame that I am retiring now, because after 40+ years in the industry, I'm finally getting the hang of it! I am 68 years old, and my wife has been struggling with a degenerative disease for years and needs more and more assistance. Even with my wife's limitations, there are still things we can do together and enjoy, but these moments are becoming fewer and have become increasingly precious. I am not willing to sacrifice these moments to stay in business.

The nursery was originally built, believe it or not, as a temporary nursery with a more permanent suite to be determined later. This was well before the passage of the Americans with disabilities act. We were recently hit with an ADA compliance lawsuit by a serial plaintiff. To comply we would have to rebuild the nursery from the ground up, which would be impractical at this time. This has made it difficult if not impossible to sell the nursery. Therefore, we will be liquidating and shutting the nursery down.

Moraga Garden Center has never been about merely selling plants; it has always been about making people better and smarter gardeners and by extension better stewards of the earth. And we have always striven to expose people to the wonder and diversity of the plant world, not just the same old stuff you see everywhere else. Hopefully, we have achieved, at least in some small way, our goals.

Happy gardening,
Kenny

ALERTWildfire cameras give Lamorinda first responders the edge during fire season



View from Moraga's Alta Mesa camera

Photo provided

By Vera Kochan

The concept of cameras located on mountain peaks, taking real-time videos of local topography in order to alert fire crews to a potential disaster, sounds like an idea that should have been invented ages ago. In fact, the ALERTWildfire cameras have only been around since 2013, but better late than never as each new fire season approaches with ever increasing drought conditions.

Graham Kent, ALERTWildfire system co-creator and director of the Nevada Seismological Laboratory at the University of Nevada, Reno, explained the

key advantages to the cameras. "They help to reduce response time to wildfires; agencies can scale their resources up or down within seconds of confirmation or discovery; agencies are able to follow fire behavior in real-time; the cameras provide critical info to first responders and public during explosive phases, where timely evacuations can save lives; and the cameras provide a watchful eye to reduce the likelihood of re-ignition after containment."

The camera's pilot program began with ALERTTahoe and the deployment of the first Pan-Tilt-Zoom cameras and microwave networks.

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50th Anniversary

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Town Council
Wednesday, July 14, 6:30 p.m.
Planning Commission:
Tuesday, July 20, 6:30 p.m.
Park and Recreation Commission:
Monday, July 19, 7 p.m.
Moraga School District Board Meetings:
Special Board Meeting
Tuesday, Aug. 10, 6 p.m. www.moraga.k12.ca.us.
See also AUHSD meeting page A2