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## The Ho-Ho-Ho was back for Moraga's Holiday Tree Lighting



Photo Vera Kochan

### The Holiday Tree lights up Moraga Commons Park

By Vera Kochan

Having to bypass last year's crowd-drawing Holiday Tree Lighting event due to COVID mandates, it was a larger than average gathering on Dec. 2 that showed up to the Moraga Commons Park to take advantage of the conviviality of the season.

Presented by the Parks and Recreation Department, Director Breyana Brandt and Recreation Coordinator Donald Scully were very pleased with the turnout of approximately 400 revelers. While Santa-hat-wearing members of the Moraga Youth Involvement Committee handed out complimentary hot cocoa and packaged cookies, the crowd of young and old alike were entertained by Selena Soberal & Eli (vocalist and guitarist).

Never one to miss an opportunity for a grand entrance, Santa Claus arrived via a shiny, red, fire engine with lights flashing courtesy of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. From the moment he stepped onto Commons ground making his way to the tree, children trotted behind him like he was the Pied Piper's cousin.

With the customary, and pretty much obligatory, countdown the enormous tree was ablaze with multi-colored LED lights signaling that the holidays have officially arrived in Moraga.

For anyone wishing to make an online Buy-A-Bulb donation visit: [moragarec.com](http://moragarec.com). To send a check, make it payable to: Town of Moraga, ATTN: Buy-A-Bulb, 2100 Donald Drive, Moraga, CA 94556.

## Admin Services Director leaving for early retirement

By Vera Kochan

After three and a half years, Administrative Services Director Norman Veloso is leaving Moraga for an early retirement. "We were able to achieve clean audits and healthy reserves through the financial integrity of the town," stated a proud Veloso. "It's a perfect setting to end my public service."

His last day as a town staff member will be Dec. 30, but in the meantime Veloso reflected on what brought him to that decision. "After almost 30 years of public service in three Bay Area cities across Solano, Sonoma and Contra Costa counties, I believe it's a perfect time to pause a bit," he said. "I wanted to retire to spend more time with my wife of 32 years, Bernadette, and my family, as well as take some time to enjoy the opportunity to travel and experience a more active lifestyle while I'm still relatively young and healthy."

When asked what his major contributions to the town were, Veloso replied, "Moraga went through some financial challenges in the past and I knew that taking on this job three years ago would be a challenge. My experience and expertise in financial management helped bring financial

stability, integrity and transparency to the town, which are essential to good governance." He added, "We achieved these with clean financial audits, balanced budgets, very healthy financial reserves, addressing the town's unfunded liabilities, and putting in place a long-range financial plan for the town."

Veloso won't completely put aside his calculator. He enjoys working in a public service capacity, finding it both challenging and fun. If the situation presents itself he may opt to work for a government agency in the future. Making a positive difference in a community is his passion.

Taking early retirement was a difficult decision for Veloso to make. "It has been an honor and pleasure to work for the town of Moraga for the last three-plus years. The town does magnificent work on behalf of the community, and I am proud to have worked with so many talented people, from staff to elected and appointed officials, as well as volunteers who are dedicated to making Moraga a wonderful place to live." Veloso reflected, "Moraga is a gem, not just because of its location, but it's a gem because of the people. This is a community I can call my second home."

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