MORAGA PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JULY 8, 2008 - 6:30 PM
HACIENDA DE LAS FLORES – *MOSAIC ROOM*
2100 DONALD DRIVE, MORAGA, CA 94556

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Mallela called the meeting to order at 6:30pm

II. **ROLL CALL:** Chairman Mallela, Vice Chair Mendonca
Commissioners: Crouch, Faoro, Haffner, Reed, Sweeney

Commissioners Absent: None

III. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Chairman Mallela asked for a motion.

Commissioner Sweeney moved and Vice Chair Mendonca seconded, to adopt the agenda as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. **PUBLIC COMMENT** - None

V. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. **Moraga Center Specific Plan**

Vice Chair Mendonca stated that from reading the Specific Plan and comparing it to the General Plan, she had no objection to ABAG requirements and meeting the spirit, but asked staff if 400 homes meets the spirit, then why would they want to entertain close to 800 homes and concentrate in a very high-density cluster. Lori Salamack, Planning Director, explained that the Council approved the project description last year that included up to 720 dwelling units. Staff reviewed the effect of modifying the land use designations on traffic in the Lamorinda region. The objective of the Specific Plan was to look at the traffic generated through the General Plan project, which is the 400 single-family residences and in the neighborhood of 50,000 square feet of commercial development and to establish that as the traffic calming level. Then look at what sort of development could be done that would have no greater traffic impact on neighboring jurisdictions. The neighboring jurisdictions would not be supportive of more traffic. They found, with respect to AM and PM peak hours that alternative residential units, such as senior units that had fewer commute trips and workforce units trips are internal to Moraga, so the units can be increased without impacting traffic. That is how they established the maximum number studied and they did review alternatives to that maximum. Moraga is a community that is aging and many Moraga residents have aging

parents and there is very little senior housing in Moraga. They found a lot of interest for new senior housing. It is also to create an economic engine to support the increased revitalization of the shopping center and create enough demand to encourage the location of businesses. In the EIR, it talked about the objectives of the plan and it is not just to provide housing and meeting ABAG requirements, but a number of items such as revitalization, mixed-use, creating activity center, enhanced retail and create a community center. Staff pointed out that the 400 dwelling unit alternative was the environmentally superior alternative, but it does a lesser job of addressing a number of the objectives. The project objective is to not just provide housing with minimal impact, but all the items articulated in the EIR and General Plan itself. Staff sees the community center as a really significant part of the plan for the Town of Moraga. Alternate locations are proposed and staff reviews the available resources to the Town Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission has expertise in this area and staff felt the Council would be well served by the Parks and Recreation Commission's recommendation on this subject.

Commissioner Haffner appreciated all of staff's great work on this document. He then discussed page 16 of the Specific Plan where it stated that there are "*no dedicated parks*" and believed that statement strikes him as odd and improper. He desired more green space. Planning Director Salamack pointed out that this is a draft document and that is the purpose of soliciting public comment. They will have special working sessions with the Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission and they welcome those comments. Rob Brook, consultant, noted that there are some proposed trails and under one alternative there is a signboard site that is a park proposal.

Commissioner Faoro asked staff if they are buying this land or how did they come about this property for the 30,000 square feet community center. Planning Director Salamack stated that if the land use development agreement initiative is approved then there is a designated site that will be made available for the development of the community center that includes the signboard property. Through the Specific Plan phase there could include a development agreement between the property owner and Town, so the land would be available.

Commissioner Reed desired more open space. She understands the population is aging and encouraging development that is appropriate for that lifestyle would be an asset to the Town.

Vice Chair Mendonca asked staff if the development initiative agreement in November were not to pass how would that effect this specific agreement and the EIR associated with it. Planning Director Salamack stated that it depends on which location the Town Council approved as the designated area. The Town property would presumably be available for this use, but the Town would not control the property privately owned by the Bruzzone Family. The Bruzzone Family is more supportive of the site internal to the shopping center. It has much greater economic vitality from a commercial perspective versus the location across from the Commons.

Commissioner Faoro expressed concern for parking with the community and recreational facilities. Planning Director Salamack indicated that would be addressed in response to comments. Even if they have adequate number of spaces for the facility, depending on the location the spaces might be used by another. If the facility is across from the Commons, those going to the concert, Skate Park or commons may use the gym parking lot. If within the shopping center, the parking for the facility might be used by shoppers, so without dedicated parking or monitoring program, it will be very difficult to control. Consultant Brook noted that the draft EIR noted that with Site B an improved pedestrian pathway is proposed if that site were selected due to that shared parking. Site A has much less constraint. Staff noted that around 3 to 4-acres is needed for the community center, but there are many factors in terms of how it is built and the location.

Chairman Mallela stated that depending on how successful the integration of all these elements occur they could end up being victims of their own success.

Commissioner Haffner has not seen evidence that this community needs a gymnasium, but he has seen evidence that this community needs a community center and senior housing, but not a gymnasium. He wants to make the existing facilities safe.

Commissioner Crouch noted that they do not have options. There are not enough basketball courts per say, but a community center that has all those amenities plus basketball covers a whole range of what is needed in Town. Director Ingram noted that the study conducted warranted at least two or three additional basketball courts.

Commissioner Haffner asked staff if the *"back 40"* was reviewed. Planning Director Salamack noted that the *"back 40"* was outside of the planning area. Commissioner Haffner stated that there is a lot of property outside the scope that must be considered such as the "*back 40."* Having the community center located across from the Commons makes the most sense, but is skeptical that the design will meet the task.

Commissioner Faro asked if there is any way to have just one building. Consultant Brook responded that the building was broken into two to have differentiated orientation and allow parking to flow. Site A will be much easier to fit and Site B has plenty of land, but that is not the preference of the landowner.

Director Ingram stated that the trend of community centers is not how it use to be. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan talks about multi-generalization community center/gym and much more effective and efficient to run one facility rather than managing two or three facilities. They are moving away from the pocket facilities. 30,000 sq. ft. community center is premature for this discussion. It does not need to be that large and it could be a multi-generalization room with the gym and a playable field that is nestled in Site A or Site B. They need to take a field trip to different facilities. Staff preferred Site A from a public safety standpoint. In regard to Site B, they must install a new entry. Historically the main entrance is between St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road and crossing over from the Skate Park is a hazard. Having a parking lot closest to the

corner works best from his perspective. Staff would like to see one facility rather than two separate facilities.
Commissioner Faoro expressed concern for available funds and asked staff where the money is coming from to build this community center. Director Ingram stated that it depends on the two initiatives in November because the Town does not have the funds to build a community center. Planning Director Salamack noted that the Palos monies have been identified as a potential source of funding, so there is definitely money to work with. Chairman Mallela noted that administration of those monies is being reviewed and how to facilitate proper use of the Palos money. Director Ingram pointed out that there is no indication whatsoever that Council is willing to give any money to recreation. Planning Director Salamack responded that it is a Council decision and this Commission can influence that decision.

Chairman Mallela stated that some thought must be given to future components of Moraga Commons as they start to move forward with making recommendations around the Specific Plan. As Commissioner Haffner mentioned, there are components that they must nail down so questions about the "Back 40" can be addressed at a high level. Planning Director Salamack stated that if the Town knows it wants this kind of facility, then all of the possible sites must be exhausted.

Director Ingram asked if a 16,000 sq. ft. community center with 2-acre grass area should be discussed versus a 30,000 sq. ft. community center. Planning Director Salamack noted that 30,000 sq. ft. community center attracted Orinda and Lafayette. A 16,000 sq. ft. is a typical facility and they did not consider an alternative plan with sports fields during the scoping sessions.

Commissioner Haffner wanted the community to consider dialogue with the School District, specifically with the property on Camino Pablo adjacent to the School District as an alternative site for the community center. He believed rebuilding the Pear Orchard around the community center is a marvelous idea. Director Ingram responded that Council and the School Board have a scheduled joint meeting on September 17th where that issue will be discussed. Commissioner Haffner believed the Pear Orchard site makes a lot of sense.

Commissioner Reed desired more opportunity to discuss the size and location of the community center because a 30,000 sq. ft. facility will attract individuals from other communities.

Commissioner Crouch believed a 30,000 sq. ft. facility along with the Master Plan that the impact would still remain the same. With housing and the retail center, he asked how that would compare to having a community center or not. Planning Director Salamack pointed out that there are trips associated with the community center. Director Ingram discussed the Moraga Aquatic Center, so those main trips are already occurring. Planning Director Salamack stated that they can have a smaller facility with less traffic, but with a larger facility it will attract individuals from other communities that will help the businesses in Moraga.

Dick Loewke, Planner/working with Bruzzone Family, stated that a tremendous amount of ground has been covered. They have been working with staff for over six years. All the property designated for higher density and retail is owned by the Bruzzone Family. Also, the shopping center according to studies the town has prepared and paid for and Bruzzone Family corroborated is suffering and not being able to support market rents. Rents are being subsidized by the Bruzzone Family. The most important purpose for the Specific Plan is to a create synergy amongst uses to create critical mass of supplemental demand within the center and community to support that retail revitalization. Not necessarily about expansion of new buildings, but a healthy center. He added that the Town is trying to accommodate their housing needs not only ABAG, but also an aging population. From their perspective there is a greater importance and without some additional critical demand that might be captured locally where people might be less likely to get into their vehicles and drive to Lafayette or Orinda, so having a mix of housing that includes seniors and workforce housing with some discretionary capability and without they cannot afford the cost of affordable housing. The housing component can help pay for the infrastructure backbone. When looking at success of program, they must look at the right mix of housing and support healthy retail and expansion of retail. Expand the regional trail through the downtown. It supports opportunities for enhancing the character rich buildings, weddings, outdoor shopping opportunities, restaurants along the creek, so several cultural opportunities that lead to a richer experience and create a destination shopping. Also, there is a very important component that housing plays in terms of economic viability of the plan. They will fall flat on their face when looking at downscaling the housing component. In regard to the community center, the traffic analysis shows that the traffic will be drawn from outside of the community. Beyond that the facility, regardless of its size, is located in the downtown in the prime retail corridor, which has a number of very serious consequences from a retail perspective. When a commercial recreation use, like a 24-hour fitness or gym is located in the heart of a retail area it will bring dedicated trips not having lunch or buying groceries. Just dedicated single purpose trips taking up retail space that could go to uses that are synergistically compatible with the area. Site A is the best location in the downtown. They believe the viability of this program hinges on not placing an incompatible use in the downtown. They are trying to reverse the sales tax leakage as seen in the report. They are trying to capture the sales tax dollars in Town rather than losing it to the surrounding communities. He sees this as an economic development venture and it is a joint venture between the Town and property owners. There must be incentives created. He then submitted a letter to the Commission for their consideration that was provided to the Planning Commission last night that addresses the issue of an oversized incorrectly placed community gym. He agreed there is a need for parks, but the reason it is not diagramed in the drawing is because they do not have a definitive mix of housing. They may not want the same kind of recreation facility in regard to student, workforce and senior housing. Parks may be built into the housing component or smaller parks depending on the type of housing choices made and that should not be prematurely indicated in the plan. In terms of incentives, consider collecting the impact fees and turning them right around and investing into facilities in the Specific Plan to help jumpstart the School Street expansion and availability of residential areas most powerful in celebrating retail growth. This is

funding and everything about the Specific Plan feasibility comes back to funding, cost and critical mass. The letter he submitted for reference and reading addresses all these issues. Placing a gymnasium in the middle of the heart of that retail use would be completely incompatible. The diagram in the EIR for Site B done by civil engineering firm was a feasibility document. Especially feasible if scaled down from 30,000 to 16,000 sq. ft.

Director Ingram noted that the 30,000 sq. ft. facility would have six courts and 16,000 sq. ft. will have one full size court and two side-by-side.

Joan Bruzzone, Moraga resident, provided a brief history of her husband and the development throughout Town. According to the Town finances, Moraga is suffering and asked how the Town can afford 6-acres of prime retail that will take away from the Town's sale tax and vital community. Two initiatives are coming up in November and more individuals will be affected then just the Bruzzone Family. She loves this Town and hated to see all the opposition that her husband received, but because of her husband the Town has been able to survive. She believed the Hacienda is a wonderful historic area and should be revitalized.

Chairman Mallela explained that they are not decision makers, but a recommending body. They are present tonight to hear from the public. They are an advisory body and many elements they have limited control over. Many participated in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is trying to find the potential solutions. The focus tonight is around those parks and recreation elements either described or not described in both the EIR and Specific Plan. They are mindful of all of the other components integral to the success of that area. They hear the comments from the public and take them very seriously.

Commissioner Haffner safety must be a priority in regard to positioning a community center. There is no easy way to have a safe crosswalk on Moraga Road. He objected to placing a community center across from the Commons due to the safety issues and the idea should be removed from any of the decisions.

Commissioner Sweeney knows that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan talks about community center/gym in this subject area, but did that also come from the Town Council. Planning Director Salamack responded in the affirmative. The Town Council approved the project area and they specifically designated Site A and Site B to be studied. The Council prioritized Site A as *"a"* and Site B as *"b."* That characterization by Council is not locked into place. The Town Council directed staff and the consultants to study the environmental impacts as they did and reflected in the EIR and draft plan. Now the analysis is available and the impacts are known. The purpose of an EIR is to inform the decision-makers and use as a tool to make good decisions.

Commissioner Sweeney stated that conceivably they could state that some other location is better for a community center. Planning Director Salamack responded in the affirmative. Staff noted that the Bruzzone Family suggested Site B in the initiative. Mr.

Dick Loewke is present to communicate that Site A as serious problems and the EIR is a draft document. Staff will be asked to address some of the economic and feasible issues. Site A flaws the Specific Plan. Site B is one they felt is feasible. There are challenges, but are not insurmountable. There are other sites that may be better and strongly encouraged the Commission to identify other sites. They would help to facilitate construction of those alternative sites. They are trying to encourage the community to not turn the plan upside down. Director Ingram asked if the Bruzzone Family would be more amenable to Site C to expedite the process quicker than Site B to maximize the economic benefit in that specific plan area. Mr. Loewke pointed out that there is no economic downside with the use of Site B as there is with Site A.

Chairman Mallela asked the Commission to review the elements in the staff report and discuss the next steps. He wanted to know the action items as a Commission that must be developed to present to Council. Planning Director Salamack stated that any comments with respect to the plan appropriate addressed in the final EIR will be addressed by their team. This Commission is not required to make a formal recommendation to the Town Council. They will not make any decisions until October, so there is time. It is most important to get the Commission's questions in terms of the EIR heard by August 1st to be incorporated into the Final EIR. After that time, the Commission can make a recommendation. Main responsibility at this point is to get their questions on the record, so they can be addressed.

Commissioner Sweeney learned a lot and this is a time in his opinion they need to proceed thoughtfully and carefully. They can benefit from continuing to study, talk and deliberate since Council is not taking this up until October. Chairman Mallela was under the impression that a recommendation was needed by August 1st, so since they have additional time he agreed with Commissioner Sweeney to continue to study the matter further. Planning Director Salamack welcomed the Commission to attend the July 22nd Town Council meeting to make comments.

Commissioner Haffner knows how important these decisions are to the future of the Town and thinks that the Commission needs to lead this Council, so this Commission must provide the right recommendations. He volunteered to take that lead, so they must submit enough information to the Council in order for them to make an informed decision.

Mr. Chee stated that they have a small Town and cannot afford large shopping centers. He travels to Lafayette to dine. This user-friendly route is a very important trail to travel to Lafayette and if they have this large facility built in the area of the trail, accidents will occur. He further asked the Commission to consider creating user-friendly facilities for all to enjoy.

Chairman Mallela recommended that they use the rest of their time to continue to ask questions and consider ideas by using their staff report. There is no specific language that requires parks. Mr. Loewke stated that the plan and EIR indicates that they must be accommodated, but at this time it is premature. Parks can be integrated with the senior

project, but that decision is yet to be made. Chairman Mallela stated that his reading of the draft plan calls for no specific discussion about a neighborhood park. Consultant Brook agreed and the draft references trails that are available, so the comment from the Commission is that the plan should have a reference to park facilities.

Director Ingram did not want to duplicate efforts with the two different plans, but the two must intermingle very closely.

Commissioner Crouch believed they must review alternative sites because safety is a concern.

Dave Bruzzone, Moraga resident, stated that there are many areas and the Town has spent money on the bowling alley site for multi-generalization facilities. There are other potential surplus areas in Town such as Miramonte, so there are other promising locations other than their site. If the Commission wants to do a thorough job and educate the Council, then this Commission must be more expansive in their search area.

Director Ingram stated that the consultants did not consider the Hacienda as a community center because it does not meet today community center standards. Indoors the Hacienda only accommodates 100 people, so that is not a community center for Moraga's population, which was unfortunate. That does not preclude outside the box thinking of replacing Caseda to have indoor year round functions and building a gym at another site. Reconstructing the Hacienda and making it more useable for year round purposes could be a possibility, but that does move away from the multi-generalization facility. They must think about their local uses. Ms. Bruzzone believed the Hacienda should be fixed up otherwise the Town is wasting their resources because it is an historic and beautiful location. The Hacienda is history and did not want the Town to give up their heritage. She stated that the Hacienda is a crown jewel that must be given consideration. Director Ingram stated that the Hacienda Foundation is conducting research in regard to the facility in terms of a park or a retreat facility, so the Hacienda Foundation will provide their findings to the Council.

Chairman Mallela pointed out that regardless of what gets done in the Moraga Center Specific Plan he thinks the Moraga Commons might see increased usage as a result. To him that speaks of additional maintenance cost and overhead generated as a result of maintaining the area now and in the future. His expectation is that the Commons would be used more if the community center is located adjacent to the Commons, so that must be given consideration.

The Commission continued the discussion to their next meeting.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Quorum for August 19 meeting**

The Commission appointed Commissioner Sweeney to serve as Chair at the August 19th, 2008 meeting since Chairman Mallela and Vice Chair Mendonca will not be in attendance.

VII. **ADJOURNMENT**

By order of the Chairman, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Woods, Recording Secretary

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Ravi Mallela, Chairman

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Jay Ingram, Parks and Recreation Director