

**TOWN OF MORAGA  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

Moraga Library Meeting Room  
1500 St. Mary's Road  
Moraga, CA 94556

March 17, 2014  
6:00 P.M.

**MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Kuckuk called the Special Meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:00 P.M.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Commissioners Comprelli, Marnane, Onoda, Schoenbrunner\*,  
Chairperson Kuckuk  
\* Commissioner Schoenbrunner arrived at 6:20 P.M.

Absent: Commissioners Levenfeld, Woehleke

Staff: Shawna Brekke-Read, Planning Director  
Ella Samonsky, Associate Planner

**B. Conflict of Interest**

There was no reported Conflict of Interest.

**C. Contact with Applicant(s)**

There was no reported contact with applicant(s).

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no comments from the public.

**3. ADOPTION OF MEETING AGENDA**

On motion by Commissioner Comprelli, seconded by Commissioner Marnane to adopt the meeting agenda, as shown. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Comprelli, Marnane, Onoda, Kuckuk  
Noes: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Levenfeld, Schoenbrunner, Woehleke

#### 4. PUBLIC MEETING

##### A. **Study Session to Discuss Amendments to Chapter 8.88 (Signs and Outdoor Advertising) of the Moraga Municipal Code Title 8, Planning and Zoning**

Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read explained that the purpose of the special meeting was to hold a study session to discuss the amendments to Chapter 8.88 (Signs and Outdoor Advertising) of the Moraga Municipal Code (MMC) Title 8, Planning and Zoning. The discussion had been scheduled for one hour after which the special meeting would adjourn to allow the Planning Commission to move into its regularly scheduled meeting at 7:00 P.M. She recognized that another study session would likely be required and had been built into the Planning Commission schedule.

Associate Planner Ella Samonsky stated that the Draft Sign Ordinance had been introduced to the Planning Commission on March 3, 2014, at which time Planning Commissioners and members of the public had provided comments. She presented the staff report dated March 17, 2014, and asked for more input from the Planning Commission and members of the public on the proposed amendments to the Draft Sign Ordinance.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS OPENED

Ellen Beans, Moraga, Chair of the Community Faire, emphasized that signage had been important on the day of the fair when A-frame signs had been placed throughout the community reading *Community Faire Today*, and on the Town's marquee, with the signs to be removed at the end of the day. Signage had also been placed on both sides of Moraga Road directing vendors and classic car participants to the driveway into the parking lot. This signage had been identified in the Draft Sign Ordinance as temporary freestanding non-commercial signs allowed only on private property but with no restriction on the number of signs. She understood the Farmers' Market would also be affected by the Draft Sign Ordinance since they too used A-frame signs throughout the Town.

Ms. Brekke-Read asked that staff be allowed to explore the concerns with legal counsel to determine what signage for the community benefit could be displayed in a legal fashion. She explained that the sign regulations had been written with that issue in mind, with freestanding signs with a non-commercial message proposed to be allowed as large as 30 square feet in commercial zones, although based on the feedback received that was too large for a political sign. The regulations proposed by staff had been intended to accommodate advertising for the Community Faire or Oktoberfest type community events. She noted that staff would be exploring a possible permitting process for a single frame sign with changeable copy.

Edy Schwartz, Moraga, commented that some signs had been allowed to be placed where they would be most visible to encourage people to attend a specific Town event, although the public was not always given the same right and was required to comply with very restrictive regulations. She asked staff to speak to that issue.

Ms. Brekke-Read explained that the new regulations were taking an approach with what was absolutely exempt, what could be handled administratively, and making it clear what absolutely required Design Review Board (DRB) review and approval. The current regulations required Town Council intervention for some signs. As examples, she cited signs for Game Day and the Community Faire requiring Town Council approval which had created a constant process for staff, and the proposed sign regulations proposed that the Town be exempt from all regulations. She cited another example as the signage that had been used to promote the passage of Measure K. In that case, it had been reasonable to exempt the Town from the regulations since the signs were for the convenience of the public, located within the public right-of-way, and endorsed by the Town Council. She understood that the signs for the Farmers' Market and the Moraga Concert Series had been approved by the Town Council in perpetuity which staff could investigate further if it remained an outstanding issue.

Ms. Brekke-Read suggested if there was a desire to have signs in the public right-of-way, a process could be considered requiring an encroachment permit which would not require Town Council approval. She commented that signage for the Community Faire had recently been considered by the Town Council which had approved signage for the event through 2018, whereas previously that signage had required approval on an annual basis.

Town Attorney Karen Murphy advised that the Town Council approval for the Community Faire signage had been for signage in general not necessarily signage located within the public right-of-way, although that would have to be confirmed.

Commissioner Comprelli reported that his wife was a member of the Moraga Women's Society which raised money for schools and utilized signs on a temporary basis placed around the Town. He suggested that local organizations should also be considered for exemption as should the Moraga Chamber of Commerce and the Town when considering permitted signage.

Bob Bratton, Moraga, Director of Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church, explained that the sign for the church was not visible and blended into the ground. The church would like to change its sign since it had been difficult to locate when funerals and weddings were held. He explained that the church was in a unique situation, did not have a parking lot or building in the front, and was situated up a hill. He expressed his hope there would be sign exemptions for churches in residential areas. The church also used temporary signage during Easter and during blood drives, and was a designated Red Cross refuge in the event of a disaster. He understood the Hacienda had experienced similar difficulties with respect to visibility and since the church was located within the scenic corridor he was uncertain that illuminated signage would be allowed during evening hours. He asked that be clarified in the Sign Ordinance.

Ms. Samonsky explained that pursuant to the Draft Sign Ordinance, external illumination that met the scenic corridor guidelines could be processed administratively through the Zoning Administrator. Changes in color would also be addressed through the same application. Since the church was located within the Sonsara Residential Development, it was likely the church would have to apply for a designated banner location for a temporary banner permit, which may also be subject to permission from the Sonsara Homeowner's Association (HOA).

Ms. Schwartz asked that staff research attractive monument signs throughout the country. She understood there was a shopping center near Stanford which had been developed by the same developer of the Moraga Town Center. She suggested that the communities of Woodside, Mill Valley, Larkspur, Palo Alto, and Menlo Park be contacted to determine what those communities were doing for monument signs. She asked that staff determine what was attractive and what was desired, and cited the Rheem Shopping Center which had some monument signs that had benefitted only the larger tenants while the other tenants were not represented as an example of what she did not want to see continue.

Chairperson Kuckuk supported monument signs with individual tenant names for multi-tenant buildings, and suggested that signage on a second story in the scenic corridor was problematic and inconsistent with the building.

Ms. Schwartz suggested as part of the Town's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary there should be a new vision. She urged creativity and different ideas than had been considered in the past, but which were also consistent and attractive in the semi-rural environment.

Commissioner Onoda suggested that would be preferable to all of the smaller signs in front of businesses. She recognized that businesses need to be found.

Chairperson Kuckuk suggested being aware of the need for the correct font size in the scenic corridor to allow the signs to be easily readable and drivers to be able to safely locate the business.

Pastor Ron Johnson, Refuge Community Church, identified the location of the church near Sky Hi-Ranch, stated he had submitted correspondence to the Planning Commission with respect to temporary signage for specific church events, and explained the difficulty of placing temporary signage given that the church was set back from the street. He understood that temporary signage had been allowed in the past for a 15-day period.

Ms. Samonsky understood the request from the church had been for the approval of a temporary banner affixed to a wall. Staff had offered an alternative recommendation to have designated locations for banners since they must all be affixed to a building.

Mr. Bratton suggested consideration of 2 x 8 foot A-frame signs which could be visible to passing traffic.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS CLOSED

Commissioner Marnane suggested that the Draft Sign Ordinance was not clear on the process for obtaining sign approval. He asked whether the design standards for signage in the Rheem Center were also intended to be applied to other centers in Town.

In response, Ms. Samonsky clarified that at one point the Uniform Sign Program for the Rheem Center had been included in the text of the Town's Design Guidelines.

As to whether the same rules would apply to the Moraga Town Center, Ms. Brekke-Read suggested they would procedurally although design wise they would not because of the existing Design Guidelines. She noted that it was unusual to have an individual sign program for a shopping center in the Design Guidelines themselves and acknowledged that the current Design Guidelines did not work well, did not help an average residential homeowner that wanted to add-on or remodel, a commercial landowner that wanted to do any kind of project, or someone wanting a sign. The Draft Sign Ordinance would help by identifying a clear process.

Ms. Murphy added that the Draft Sign Ordinance would allow signage for new applications to be addressed in a more uniform way. Existing signs would be non-conforming, in conformance with the new Sign Ordinance, or those Uniform Sign Programs previously approved for the shopping centers.

After reading the Draft Sign Ordinance, Commissioner Marnane reiterated that he found the process was not clear and he asked staff to revisit that issue.

Chairperson Kuckuk asked that the list of definitions add a definition for "cabinet signs." She thanked staff for the hard work.

## 5. ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Commissioner Marnane, seconded by Commissioner Comprelli and carried unanimously to adjourn the Special meeting of the Planning Commission meeting at 6:55 P.M.

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Secretary of the Planning Commission

