

The monthly meeting of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce was held at the Hacienda on Sept. 25, 7:30 a.m.

Announcements:

- **Kathy _____**, MEF representative, urged the membership to be informed about Measure G on the Nov. 3 ballot, a measure which renews and continues the school district's existing \$189 parcel tax, **without increasing taxes**.
- **Brad Noggle** of 5A Rent a Space has free tickets to SMC volleyball, and men's and women's soccer games. Come by, get some tickets, and cheer on the Gaels.
- **Jay Ingram**, Park and Recreation Director, invited everyone to come to the Oktoberfest at the Hacienda from 2-6 p.m. on Oct. 11.

The next monthly Chamber meeting will be on Tuesday evening, October 27, at the Hacienda.

Mike Segrest, the town's new manager, was the guest speaker. After describing his professional background, he talked about several topics that affect the business climate. He started by saying that the Chinese symbol for "crisis" can have two meanings. One is "danger", and that in a crisis such as we are in right now as a country and town, we could make bad decisions. Crisis can also mean "opportunity", offering the possibility of thinking outside the box and being very creative.

The geography of this town affects business because there is no through traffic. We are off the freeway, and have only two roads in and out of town, so having the Shop Moraga First campaign is very important. If we could capture more of Moraga's sales tax due to more purchases made in town, it would triple the benefit and increase sales by 40%. To do this we must have a diverse selection of businesses.

Increasing the population too would have a positive effect on business. The Specific Plan could add as many as 630 housing units and 9,000 square feet of commercial space. The town is required to provide diverse housing opportunities, such as for seniors wanting to down-size and stay in Moraga, for SMC faculty and students, and for those in the Moraga workforce. There would be a range of housing prices to accommodate those in the \$52,000 range, for example – an income rated as low for Moraga.

Mr. Segrest spoke of his several conversations with the management of Kimco, owner of most of the Rheem shopping center. He has been told that Kimco has no plans to level Rheem, as some have speculated. Mr. Segrest has told Kimco they need to have someone here in town to handle the issues and direction for the Center. Developing a Specific Plan for Rheem has not yet been done, partly because there is much less undeveloped land than in the Moraga Center.

Mr. Segrest suggested to the Chamber business members that they target the older residents that will grow in the years ahead – address their needs and interests. Since Saint Mary's College is the largest employer in Moraga, it would be in the interests of everyone to become knowledgeable of the shopping and housing needs of the faculty and students.

HomeGoods and TJ Maxx are success stories which other businesses could learn from. Lafayette has become very successful without having any “big box” stores and by having a good mix of small retail. Together they have created excellent synergy that draws business into Lafayette.

Mike closed by mentioning the possibility of Moraga having a business license tax, which could create a sizeable fund for the Chamber to use to develop a stronger, more vital business environment.