

Town Council Transition With a Few Hiccups

By Sophie Braccini



New Mayor Lynda Deschambault with Vice-Mayor Dave Trotter

Photo Sophie Braccini

Passage of the baton is usually a smooth operation at the top of the Town's hierarchy. On December 12th, the Moraga Town Council felt a few jolts in the transmission, but the end result was what everyone expected, as Michael Metcalf handed over the Mayor's seat to Lynda Deschambault.

During the public comment session, two citizens voiced their concern about the process itself: "There should be more than one nomination," said Barbara Simpson after Dave Trotter nominated Deschambault as the next mayor and no other person was proposed. Another citizen was even more forceful: "... it seems it was all already decided behind closed doors."

Town Manager Philip Vince explained that traditionally the number of votes obtained by

each council member during the election determines the order in which they become Mayor and Vice-Mayor. In the last election, Metcalf received the largest number of votes and became Mayor, followed by Deschambault who was named Vice-Mayor. By that method, the next Vice-Mayor would be Dave Trotter, followed by Ken Chew. "What is the point of nominating and electing people if there is an existing rule to select them?" Metcalf asked. The Council decided to postpone discussing the legality of a process that has been in place for some 20 years until a future meeting.

Deschambault was elected with three votes, from herself, Trotter and Chew; Metcalf and Rochelle Bird abstained. Chew nominated Trotter to become the next Vice-Mayor and Metcalf

nominated Bird. Trotter was elected Vice-Mayor with three votes.

After the election, Metcalf delivered a very thoughtful message, reflecting on his tenure as Mayor. His first point was that Moraga needs to realize how much it is part of a community of towns: "We are not as much as a cul-de-sac as we think," said he, "we depend on everyone else, we need to think about ourselves as part of a bigger community."

Metcalf warmly thanked the Town staff for their work. "Staff does the job, they're the ones who get the laundry out." He asked that staff be honored and respected.

Metcalf's address was followed by public acknowledgment of his leadership, open-mindedness and flexibility. "You're an engineer who showed heart," concluded former Mayor Michael Majchrzak.

It was then Deschambault's turn to give her first address. She, too, thanked staff for their hard work and support. She addressed the public to urge committees and volunteers to continue their participation in the town's affairs: "Your contribution is key to maintaining transparency in the management of public affairs," she said. To give a first flavor of what her objectives were going to be for her tenure, she reminded the audience of her campaign motto: Thoughtful progress, to protect our past and plan for our future.