



Meet Moraga's New Mayor

By Sophie Braccini

Lynnda Deschambault is a New Hampshire native who chose Moraga when she moved to the Bay Area eighteen years ago. Like the song Moraga kids learn in elementary school, "The hills of Moraga are calling" to her. Open space is her passion, her everyday pleasure and inspired her professional and political career.

"I have loved spending time in nature since I was a child," says the new Mayor, "I like feeling small and part of the great big sphere." A science teacher in the 8th grade helped her transform this passion into a profession. Her class went to a three-day field trip in the mountain, studying animals, water, and air. There she decided that live science was interesting and fun and that she wanted to dedicate her life to study and protect nature. Deschambault holds undergraduate degrees in Chemistry and Soil Science, and an MBA. She is currently an Environmental Scientist with the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Deschambault was drawn to local politics after a long engagement in non-profit activism, during which she realized that elected officials have a great role to play in effecting change. When she ran for Town Council in November of 2004, some people were unhappy about increasing development in Moraga. She felt that those who wanted to preserve the semi-rural character of the town needed an elected voice. "Development, in a place like Moraga, has to be pondered with extreme caution," believes Deschambault, "before making a decision I always remember the Iroquois principle 'we should consider how the decision we're about to make will affect the next seven generations.'"

In her first years on the Town Council, Deschambault's objective was to improve government transparency; she hopes to continue increased transparency and public involvement and is optimistic about the development of a community calendar, televised Town meetings, improved noticing for important agenda items, and is confident she can more effectively engage residents, especially those at St Mary's College and Moraga's youth.

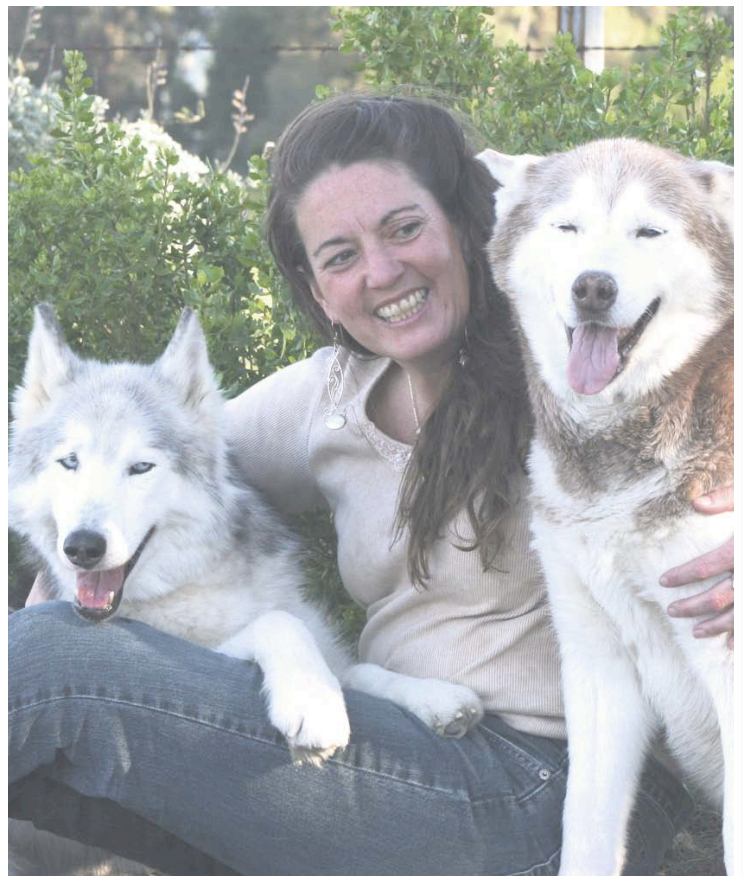
Deschambault has also focused on improving the ecological state of the Town of Moraga. Among other things, she has helped the community produce a Mulholland Habitat Preservation and Restoration Plan, she supported the Invasive Plant Removal Program, the Integrated Pest Management Program suggested by the local grassroots group "Parents for a Safer Environment," and proposed that the town become a member of the US Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement.

"Moraga's future will likely see increased native plantings and a wetland restoration project on Mulholland during my tenure as Mayor," says Deschambault, "I'll be working closely with community groups to promote the importance of local shopping and the use of sturdy reusable shopping bags. I hope to update town street lights to more efficient and energy saving styles, while also promoting solar, day lighting, and geothermal elements in town buildings."

She noted that her two main goals continue to be "Preserving the Past, Planning for the Future." Deschambault is keen to put policies in

place that protect our ridgelines and scenic vistas, and wants to revitalize business with infill near existing commercial areas. She is hopeful that the Council can come to agreement on a Specific Plan that includes both shopping areas, integrates the old with the new, and results in one village-like area that flows with existing retail. Taking the lead to engage the Chamber of Commerce and to form an Economic Development committee, Deschambault envisions a number of retail-focused events that bring vibrancy to the shopping areas and is excited to see the final production of a long term Economic Strategy for the Town of Moraga.

Right now, Deschambault spends 8-20 hours a week on her Town duties. All Council members, including the Mayor, serve voluntarily with no monetary remuneration. She still makes time to walk the trails of Moraga with her two Huskies, to find peace, inspiration and the energy to continue to fight for her vision of Moraga.



Lynda Deschambault