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# Moraga's Vice-Mayor Takes a Stand

*By Sophie Braccini*

The excitement was palpable in the JM auditorium where a small crowd gathered for the September 27th Council meeting. Some had come with the desire to see Moraga Mayor, Lynda Deschambault, brought to her knees by Moraga resident Lee Bren. But after what was a rather short exchange of testimony from less than a dozen residents, both for and against the mayor, Vice-mayor Dave Trotter took a firm stand in support of his colleague, making it clear that a change of Mayor would not be put on the agenda. For months now Bren has been researching the Mayor's credential and showering residents with emails claiming that Moraga Mayor Deschambault has been lying in her resume and been deceitful in her ways of managing the Town's affairs. "Acting Mayor Deschambault has presented a pattern of deception that residents will not tolerate any more," insisted Bren. His list of complaints against Deschambault includes: false representation by Deschambault that she was a science teacher at Los Perales, tampering with staff reports, and lying about the number of degrees she holds from the University of New Hampshire. "What we ask tonight," concluded Bren, "is that the Mayor resign from her position or that the Council takes steps to force her out." A few other residents shared Bren's perspective that the Mayor had, in their opinion, lost all credibility. But almost four years after Deschambault was elected and nearing the end of her term (Deschambault will not run again in November), one could wonder what motivated such doggedly pursuit on Bren's part. "Losing an election can happen to anybody," said Trotter, who reminded the crowd that Bren had lost the Council election to Deschambault four years ago, "it should not make one bitter." Bren's supporters loudly rebuked that inference about Bren's motivations. Deschambault responded publicly to Bren, so her arguments would become public record. "I never edited town's documents" stated the Mayor, "the Town Manager had asked for my recommendation on form, not substance and I made three recommendations on post-its about the structure of a report, not its content." Trotter also said, "This tampering issue never happened and it was confirmed at the time by the Town Manager, it's time to move on." Deschambault stated that she never claimed to hold a teaching credential. She had substituted in the local schools as a teacher assistant. To do so, personnel are required to pass the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) and be fingerprinted to get what she called a teaching certificate. She has requested that a proof of her passing the CBEST be mailed to her, which will take thirty days. Councilmembers Mike Metcalf and Ken Chew didn't express an opinion about the issue. Councilmember Rochelle Bird (who will also not seek re-election) said, "We need to restore the trust of the people in its elected officials." Bird admitted that she didn't know how to do so and suspected she would be the only one on the Council with this frame of mind. "I agree with Lee Bren," said Susan Junfish, another Moraga resident, "and think it is important to see the Mayor's credential. However there are issues that are more important to deal with today and I want to commend Linda for all she has done for the town." Junfish reminded the audience of the Integrated Pest Management policy, the demolition ordinance, the rehabilitation of Mulholland Ridge, and Moraga joining the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, among other achievements. Others who had come to urge the Council to focus on the issues at hand shared her point of view. Former Moraga Councilmember and Mayor Cherie

Grant thanked all the Council its hard volunteer work. "When you are the Mayor, you work ten times harder than when you sit on the Council," remembered Grant, "with absolutely no pay or compensation."

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