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## Moraga Candidates Forum: Personalities and Alliances Emerge

By *Sophie Braccini*

The Candidates Forum organized by the Moraga Citizens Network was a great success. The 175 seats in the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School auditorium were full, and a hundred more residents stood and spilled over to the outside of the space. For those who missed this memorable evening in the democratic life of our town, the Lamorinda Weekly recorded the event and has posted it online; you can view the entire presentation or select the questions or statements that interest you.

The public was attentive, responsive and respectful. Each candidate was at their best; they were there to prove they are worthy of your vote. Some managed to get a good laugh from the audience - see it for yourself at <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com>.

A solid contender, Howard Harpham exuded credibility. A retired assistant public defender, Harpham knows how the system works, and how to step back and observe what's going on. He was not emotional, and knew when to raise an eyebrow to convey a message.

Karen Mendonca played in the same league, displaying the same calm demeanor. A Berkeley Ph.D., she made a specialty of working with dysfunctional groups and presented herself with confidence, indicating a desire to work for the common good.

As the only incumbent, Mike Metcalf drew on his four years of experience to score points for knowledge and practicality, pointing to the successes of the present Council.

Janice Kolbe used her experience as President of the Moraga Country Club to establish her credibility and prove she could work with a diverse group. Her direct and folksy style added a bit of spice to the debate.

Dennis Wanken was an anomaly, not fitting into any one box. He brought yarns of different colors to the table and drew on his experience on the School Board to demonstrate that he could make a difference on the Council.

By far the least conventional of the six was the youngest contender, Brad Kvederis. Less experienced, more naïve, but full of ideas and enthusiasm he was a welcome addition to an otherwise somewhat consensual presentation.

It is interesting to note that some of the candidates have contributed to each others' campaigns. Metcalf and Kolbe contributed \$150 to Harpham's campaign. The three of them were united in their opinion on the land use initiatives, along with Wanken, declaring a clear "no on both" position. Mendonca and Kvederis supported Measure K.

For further details on the candidates' positions, you can refer to the Moraga Citizens Network's questionnaire, online at <http://www.moragacitizensnetwork.org/>, and two of our archived articles, available online at: <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/>

[archive/issue0215/Moraga-Town-Council-Candidates-Discuss-Priorities.html](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0215/Moraga-Town-Council-Candidates-Discuss-Priorities.html) and [www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0214/Moraga-Candidates-to-Town-Council-on-Participatory-Democracy.html](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0214/Moraga-Candidates-to-Town-Council-on-Participatory-Democracy.html).

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