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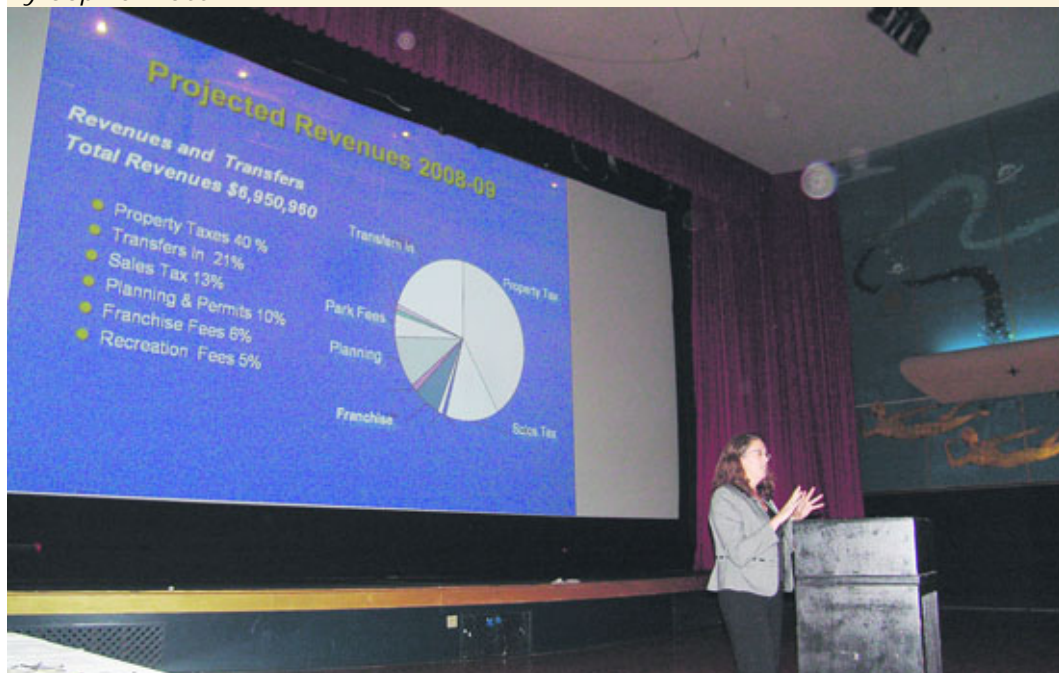
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Published November 26th, 2008

## State Of The Town Address: Lynda Deschambault's Legacy and Lamorinda Weekly Honored

By Sophie Braccini



Mayor Linda Deschambault at Rheem Theatre Photo Andy Scheck

As she presented the State of the Town address on November 19th, Lynda Deschambault, Moraga Mayor, made her farewell address as well. She didn't run for re-election and will pass the baton on December 10th to a new Mayor. The yearly event was co-sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, which announced its Businessperson of the Year: Your friendly neighborhood news hounds are very proud that our fearless leader, publisher Andy Scheck, received this distinction for 2008.

Making public a State of the Town address was one of Linda Deschambault's requests when she was elected four years ago. Her first priority was to advance an open and transparent democracy. Since her election, adhoc committee meetings that were not open to the public and had no minutes published have disappeared, meeting minutes and staff reports are online and commissioners are selected in a public process. The outgoing Mayor presented her address at the Rheem Theater to a group of about 75 people. She explained that in spite of difficult economic times the Town was standing by its core values while balancing its budget.

Moraga's core values were defined in the General Plan. The semi-rural character of the town, the preservation of its open spaces, the safe environment, the high level of maintenance, the quality of the schools and other public services, and the high level of civic involvement are all part of what makes Moraga. In recapping the year Deschambault showed how these principles had guided the Council.

Deschambault said that fiscal responsibility of the Town is demonstrated by

two facts: a balanced budget and a reserve fund that has slightly increased and is at \$1.4M. A new budget is to be presented on December 3rd that will include cost cuttings. In the area of revenue, the Town is vulnerable to the State's decision to withhold funds but steps have been taken such as the "development impact fee" that was voted this year which will give the Town a bit more independence.

"I'm glad we were able to get the golf course project out of Palos Colorados to keep our commitment to open space and wild life and still get \$17M for our town," said Deschambault. The Town became more environmentally aware, requiring that new development include open space as part of future application processes. Most recently, the Town accepted the greenhouse gas emission inventory that was established in cooperation with Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI.)

The Town is in the process of approving a significant amount of new homes for the years to come. The total is a potential of 249 of market priced homes, including Palos Colorados, Rancho Laguna, Hetfield, Larch, Los Encinos and the Country Club. The Town is also planning how it will meet State requirements for affordable housing. The first part of the Specific Plan that addresses the Moraga Center area could include up to 700 multi-family dwelling units. Deschambault highlighted that Moraga's affordable housing obligation is of 245 units that could be met with student housing, senior housing and secondary (or in-law) units on bigger properties.

Public safety is high on every citizen's list and this year the situation has been challenging for our police force, with 3 out of 13 officers out on long-term disability. The department is still showing excellent results though with crime rate numbers down.

Public Works represented this year 29% of the expenditure of the town (almost \$2M), almost as much as Public Safety (31%.) The department continued its maintenance of the road infrastructure by repairing potholes and sealing cracks. The Ascot stoplight project is ramping up, while EBMUD is finishing the major pipe installation that impaired traffic on Moraga Road all summer and fall.

Deschambault concluded by thanking the Town staff that is doing so much in spite of serious attrition. She recognized how many functions of the Town are performed by the volunteers who are active in many commissions and independent groups. Looking ahead she identified the budget as a major concern, as well as defining the correct options to develop the town both from a housing and business perspective. She sees great potential in the renewed relationship between the town and St Mary's college, from an intellectual, cultural and economic point of view.

After Deschambault's address, Edy Schwartz, President of the Chamber of Commerce, presented Andy Scheck with the "Business Person of the Year Award." She talked about his life in Germany, his experience on a town council there, his unflinching energy and desire to create. Scheck told the audience he enjoyed the new adventure of creating this newspaper with his wife, Wendy. After almost two years of very hard work he is proud to have established a sustainable business very much loved by the population.

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