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Moraga Appoints a Revenue Enhancement Committee

By *Sophie Braccini*

A much anticipated Revenue Enhancement Committee was approved by the Moraga Town Council on March 26. Only three Council Members were present; the two newest members, Karen Mendonca and Howard Harpham, were away in training. The mission of the Committee is to recommend to the Town Council potential strategies for enhancing existing, and creating new, revenues sources for the General Fund and special-purpose needs.

Back in February, the Town Council authorized the formation of a Revenue Enhancement committee, and appointed Mayor Dave Trotter and Council Member Mike Metcalf to serve on that committee. The two men worked on a charter document and the list of people they felt were suitable to sit on the committee.

At the Council meeting, Vice-Mayor Chew asked why other Council Members had not been asked to propose names and why no announcement for recruitment was made to the public. At this time it appears that one seat is still vacant for a member of the Chamber of Commerce and one for the general public.

Trotter and Metcalf wrote the charter and selected the members according to a series of criteria. "Among other things, we were looking for people with a broad cross-section of prior and current experience, as community volunteers and/or elected officials, with the Town, the MOFD and the Moraga schools," said Mayor Trotter, we were also looking for people with specific skills and expertise in financial and accounting matters, corporate and municipal finance, and public communications. These criteria guided the selection process."

Each town and city has different processes to set up such committees. For example, in Orinda, according to Mayor Sue Severson, the Charter of the Revenue Enhancement Task Force was written by the entire City Council, all Orinda community members were eligible to apply, and a description of the committee was posted publicly, in many ways, for several weeks.

The selected individuals in Moraga are: Trish Bare, who has a long record of community service in Moraga focusing on education and improving local schools; a former attorney, Bare served for many years on the board of directors of the Moraga Education Foundation (MEF).

Robert Kennedy is a past Treasurer of the Town and current member of the Audit and Finance Committee. Ravi Mallela is a banker, working in Corporate Finance at Wells Fargo. He is the current chairman of the Moraga Parks and Recreation Commission. Dick Olsen is retired, a former senior executive at Transamerica Insurance and an instrumental member of the mid-1990's ad hoc committee appointed by the Town Council to study the feasibility of forming the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, and then helped lead the successful LAFCO annexation and election campaigns that followed; financial analysis is one of Olsen's many strengths. Kathy Ranstrom is an attorney and professor of law at John F. Kennedy University; she is a past president of MEF and the chair of recent successful Moraga School District parcel tax campaigns. Frank Sperling was elected to the Moraga Orinda Fire District Board in 2006, he was a Moraga Town Councilmember (1994-1998) and former mayor. Tom Westhoff is an investment banker, founder and president of Westhoff, Cone & Holmstedt, a Walnut Creek investment banking firm specializing in municipal bond financing in the State of California; he is an active Moraga volunteer and former member of the Moraga Park and Recreation Foundation. Representing the Town Council, Metcalf and Trotter will sit on the

committee, as will Tracy Vesely, the current Town Treasurer. One member will be appointed in collaboration with the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. The Town Manager and Finance Director will also be part of the committee.

The meetings of the committee will be subject to the Brown Act and open to the public. Meeting times will be set by the committee and posted on the web site.

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