



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published August 19th, 2009

## Letters to the Editor

To the editor:

Kudos to Andrea Firth on her thoughtful and informative article on the Moraga Orinda Fire District pension issue. This story has taken on a life of its own with our local daily newspaper opting for sensationalism over journalism, and the usual chorus of contrarians making ludicrous (albeit predictable) assertions that the fire chief's pension could be used to fix Orinda's roads.

Sensational accounts may provide provocative fodder for idle chatter, but they do little in the way of furthering thoughtful discourse. Moreover, it saddens me to think that this issue has been spun in such a way as to call into question the integrity of Fire Chief Pete Nowicki who has served our community with honor and professionalism for over 26 years. Certainly he, and the men and women who work under him deserve better.

Ms. Firth's was the first account I've read that actually presents the facts with a balance of opinions and calls attention to the real question, that being the long-term viability of the current pension system.

Pat Rudebusch  
Orinda

Dear Editor,

This past week I attended the candidates' forum at the Soda Center auditorium at Saint Mary's College in Moraga. It was packed with 500 people. I had come to learn about the views of the Democratic and Republican candidates that are running for Ellen Tauscher's 10th District seat in the House of Representatives. I knew very little about any of the candidates, so I went to learn what they believed on many of the important issues that affect Contra Costa County and the nation.

On the main floor on either side of the stage two uniformed policemen gazed out at the crowd. As I watched them, I wondered, "What are two policemen doing at a public forum in Moraga?". Shortly after the moderator began, an elderly gentleman, right in front of me, stood up and yelled out, "Where are the Republican candidates?" The moderator calmly stated that there would be no verbal discussion from the floor. She raised a piece of paper and said all comments need to be submitted in written form. She instructed someone to bring the man a piece of paper. The folks around the gentleman explained the evening's format to him - first the Democrats would speak, followed by the Republican candidates. The man sat down and remained throughout the evening.

The Democrats and the Republicans had equal time. Many questions were asked and answered. The candidates stayed around afterward and answered more questions. I learned a lot from all the candidates. I left feeling more informed and better prepared to make my choice for the coming election.

I went home and turned on the news. The lead story was of a town meeting where health care was the topic. There was yelling. There was anger, and there was frustration. The speaker had no chance to educate the people on his interpretation of the facts contained in the health care bill. The people had no chance to learn from him about health care. I then realized why two policemen were at the Moraga event. There was concern that the candidates would not be able to speak, due to being interrupted by a crowd of angry people. This did not happen. 500 people sat quietly, asked their questions and allowed the candidates to respond. Everyone learned.

Education is key to inform the electorate. Free speech is the right of all citizens. Dissent must be heard, but not at the cost of the free speech of others. There is room in this system for all views to be spoken and heard. Let us be sure we do not harm our system by our anger, frustration and fear. Let us remember that information is needed on all sides of an issue, and let us create environments, as was done at Saint Mary's College, where all ideas are welcome at the table. In this way we will all have a better chance of making an informed decision.

Edy Schwartz  
Moraga

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA