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## Moraga School Board, Old and New Faces

By *Sophie Braccini*

There won't be an election for the Moraga School Board this fall - only three candidates have filed for the three open seats: incumbent Charles MacNulty, and two new faces, Kym Leserman and Kathy Ranstrom, will be appointed to the Board.

Charles MacNulty will be serving his 3rd term on the Moraga School Board. "People move to Moraga because of the schools, our test scores are consistently high, and a good school district is what keeps the home prices high," he says, "we've done really well, but the challenge have to face is our financial needs for the years to come." As to the recent cut backs that were necessary due to reduced State funding, MacNulty says, "We've done our best to protect the core of the District, the classrooms," he says, "but we had to cut the custodial and administrative services, and that was hard."

During his tenure he has paid special attention to Special Education, "the earlier the identification of an issue the better," he says. These services are often the first ones that get cut when budgets get tight, but in Moraga, thanks to parents support, Special Ed was sustained.

For the next four years MacNulty identifies the financial situation of the District as his primary concern. "We've been deficit spending and the State has not given us a budget yet," he recons, "we will probably have to consider a parcel tax to insure the future of our schools." His other area of focus will be to make sure that the articulation between middle school and high school is optimized, and he wants to see metrics to assess the performance. "We will be looking at an increased collaborative effort between the two school districts," he says.

Kym Leserman is a graduate of the University of Florida with an MA in Public Administration. She has lived in Moraga for 10 years, has sent her two children to Moraga schools and over these ten years has served in many volunteer capacities, including being the President of MEF for two years, being Los Perales PTA President and Auditor of the JM PTA. She decided to join the Board because she believes that she has developed, through her education, work, and volunteer experience, the leadership skills and knowledge necessary to evaluate the issues and options, build consensus, and make decisions. "The major issue facing the district is the ongoing financial crisis," she writes, "The Governing Board voted to use \$600,000 from district reserves to cover about half of the projected budget shortfall this coming year. That \$600,000, along with donations from MEF (over \$1,000,000) and the PTAs (approximately \$300,000), have allowed the district to preserve most programs and staffing at 2009-2010 levels. At the \$600,000 rate of deficit spending, though, the district's reserves will be spent down to the state-required minimum within three years. We will need to look at options to increase local support in order to prevent deep cuts to programs and services." Leserman thinks it would be a good idea for the district to take a look, next year, at the pros and cons of raising the current parcel tax. In addition to addressing the District's financial situation, she would like to look at what types of innovative programs other high performing districts in California and around the country are providing for their students.

Kathy Ranstrom was raised in Moraga and returned to raise her own three children. A graduate of UC Davis, she practiced law in San Francisco, until she decided to teach instead in order to have more time for her family. She has been for years an all-around volunteer who started at the Camino Pablo Site Council, and has provided her guidance to the PTA and MEF and worked on many committees related to school issues and beyond. "I come from a family of five children and have three kids," she says, "I really understand the limitation of my own experience. There are many different kids and there is not one answer."

Ranstrom believes that we are in a time of tremendous challenge and tremendous opportunity, "It's the 4th year of significant budget cut, there is tipping point, you can't keep cutting year after year before impacting educational programs," says Ranstrom, "This district has done an extraordinary job keeping the impact away from the classroom." Also the chair of the parcel tax oversight committee for Measure K, she adds, "those funds will no longer cover expenses within two years," she says, "We will have to quantify the cuts or go to the voters."

Ranstrom would like the district's teachers of feel fully supported, and hopes that the community at large will be involved in the development of the new strategic plan. "Finding out what the community wants allows you to prioritize," she says. She was involved in the previous plan's intake, "I like online surveys, town halls meetings, parents and community members can be part of committees, and we could ask the high school children for their input too," she added.

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