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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Within the past month, I have attended three public meetings in the town of Moraga. The first was a Planning Commission meeting on September 20, 2010 during which the Dollar Tree application in the Rheem Shopping Center was discussed and considered for approval. I would like to commend the members of the Planning Commission for creating an environment in which opinions and comments from both citizens and applicants could be expressed. The commission conducted itself with thoughtfulness and intelligence in its deliberations and treated all those in attendance with respect.

The second event I attended was Candidates' Night on October 5, 2010, an event that was sponsored by the Moraga Citizens Network. This event provided an excellent, non-partisan and inviting environment in which the town's citizens could hear the views of candidates running for the Town Council and pose questions to the candidates. The event was videotaped, and a link was made available to allow viewing for those who were unable to attend. The organization of this event was professional, and the information obtained was extremely valuable.

The third event I attended was the Moraga Town Council Meeting on October 13, 2010 during which appeals to the Dollar Tree application approval were discussed. Having been quite impressed with the last two forums, I was anticipating a similar experience. I could not have been more wrong. The tone of this meeting rapidly became unprofessional and antagonistic. With the exception of Council Members Dave Trotter and Karen Mendonca, the members of the Town Council, including the Mayor, treated the citizens of our community with disdain, disrespect and arrogance. As a forty-six year resident of Moraga, I was both embarrassed and outraged at the improper manner in which this meeting was conducted. I would like to encourage the Town Council to remember that they represent the members of this community. Many of the citizens who addressed the Town Council are the very people who make this community exceptional. They are the parents volunteering in our schools, raising funds to better our education system, running small businesses and shopping in Moraga. To disregard or belittle the opinions and needs of these citizens is to the true detriment of this community; for without their efforts, the future of our town is very grim indeed.

Kay Gertmenian

Moraga

Editor:

In a recent letter Steve Cohn claims that Orinda is subsidizing Moraga's fire services, a statement that has been proven totally incorrect several times by different people. His contention is based on an analysis he prepared using city limits as the dividing line. Unfortunately, his analysis demonstrates a total lack of understanding of fire district operations, rendering his conclusions meaningless.

All multi-city fire districts, including MOFD, ignore city limits and operate according to "areas of service." In the case of MOFD, there are 700 Orinda homes [all of which were located in the old Moraga Fire District] included in the service area of Moraga fire stations. An additional 800 Orinda homes are served from Moraga for medical emergencies. Therefore, any accurate analysis of revenue and expenses should use the area of service, not city boundaries in determining whether or not citizens are "paying more than their fair share."

Mr. Cohn further complains in his letter that only two of the five MOFD board members are residents of Orinda, neglecting to mention that there have been 3 Orindans on the board since the district was formed 13 years ago. Orinda has always gotten its money's worth. It is time to put this misleading idea to rest.

Ellen Dale

Orinda

Editor:

I was the co-chair of the volunteer committee which developed the 1987 Orinda General Plan and also volunteered for other City planning activities. After almost 15 years I retired and withdrew from all such activities. Recently, however, I became concerned about what I was reading in the Lamorinda Weekly. I attended this week's Downtown Visioning Meeting. This letter comments about some of what I heard. It does not deal with any of the proposals for change, since I haven't read them.

I heard several people express distrust because of the City's activities so far. I even heard concern about the way the meeting was structured, asking for expressions of what people do and don't like about downtown rather than discussing specific proposals. This is exactly how we started work on the 1987 General Plan. I wish that the City started that way this time. The process until this week has engendered suspicion and hostility which will make it harder to reach a conclusion acceptable to most people; it will also make it less likely that business people will be willing to risk investing in our downtown. The history of Theater Square and Gateway-Wilder is enough by itself to make any sensible investor expect long delays and large additional costs for any proposal to change anything in Orinda. This may be the real explanation of why there has been so little new construction downtown.

The City seems to want to start over. I think we should give them a chance before we decide whether we're being

manipulated.

My other concern at the meeting is that people who are not sufficiently aware of the constraints the City works under are making proposals without recognizing what the facts are. For example, the vast majority of property tax is kept by the State. As a result, the costs for City services for new development, like fire and police protection and schools, can exceed the added income from our share of property tax. When we studied development in Gateway-Wilder, we discovered that this was likely to be the case. We were not the first to find this out; Petaluma had done a pioneering study that had the same result. Both real estate prices and wages have increased in the last 23 years, so there would have to be a separate study to find out what the situation is now.

Some people seem to think that the existing General Plan uses the term "semi-rural" to refer to downtown. The General Plan only uses the term to refer to residential areas, and has a clear definition of what it means. The Plan uses the term "village" to refer to downtown areas and discusses what that means.

There seems to be an assumption that many seniors living here now want to move to downtown condos. I'm 83 years old. I will stay in my house for as long as I can and when I can't take care of myself any more, I'll move to an assisted living facility. My friends seem to think the same way. Those who sold their houses moved far away to be closer to family or live in more rural areas.

Lily Regelson
Orinda

Editor:

On October 7th I attended the Orinda School Board Candidates Forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley. The Forum was provided to give Orinda voters a chance to hear from each candidate. The audience was also given the opportunity to submit questions for the five candidates to answer. The OUSD Candidate Forum is now available to watch on You Tube. The time you spend watching the forum may be one of the best investments you ever make in your children's future. The You Tube link is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yG9gea7cXN8>.

Bob Kadie
Orinda

Editor:

Thank you for publishing the excellent article on Date Rape (10/13/10) by Margie Ryerson.

As a pediatrician, I want to add that all women of child-bearing age (including young teenagers!) should be educated about emergency contraception ("Plan B" or "the morning after pill"). This medication can prevent pregnancy if taken within a few days of unprotected sexual intercourse. It does NOT cause abortion. For excellent information readers can consult the U. S. Dept of Health website: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/emergency-contraception.cfm#h>

Young women under age 18 must obtain a prescription for emergency contraception. I encourage all parents and pediatricians to talk frankly to their teenagers about this, so that if there is a tragic event like a date rape, the young woman can immediately obtain medical help to prevent pregnancy.

Eileen Benway, MD
Lafayette

Editor:

County district attorneys are the most powerful law enforcement officials that concern our daily lives. Their decisions affect civil liberties, personal security, fairness of business practices and public officials' integrity. Yet too often they hide their grave failings behind the amorphous veil of "prosecutorial discretion," shielded from public disclosure, scrutiny and accountability.

Voters ousted D.A.'s in eight counties (including Santa Clara and Sonoma) in June. Contra Costa District Attorney Robert Kochly has mismanaged an office that is infamously wracked by malfeasance, incompetence and nonfeasance. Contra Costa D.A. candidates need to explain their stances on the following issues:

- How specifically will you cleanse your agency?
- Scope of duties: Will you vigorously prosecute white-collar criminals, including identity thieves? Consumer and environmental protection and other civil actions? Public integrity breaches (Assessor Gus Kramer)?
- Budget: How will you ensure that the Board of Supervisors adequately funds your office, including misdemeanor prosecutions? Do you favor reform of the County's "3% at 50" pension scheme?
- Victims' rights: Will you effectively represent victims' interests or will you force them to hire their own attorneys to prod you?
- Annual report: Will you issue regular public reports concerning the above?

We deserve answers.

Jason A. Bezis (attorney)
Lafayette

Editor:

Want a quick way to compare the candidates?

Go to www.smartvoter.org, a service of the League of Women Voters Education Fund. Enter your address to get a personalized virtual ballot with links to each race, and each candidate who has submitted information to us.

Alternatively, use the search feature to find specific races or candidates.

If you live in Orinda and want to watch the school board candidates forum, video clips are available at <http://www.smartvoter.org/2010/11/02/ca/cc/race/3571/>.

Ashley Coates
Moraga

MOFD Candidates

Editor:

It's time for a change.

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District has been in place since 1997, and many of the current Board members have been involved since that time. It became apparent to me that, as voters, we have not paid enough attention to this Board when late last year I read about our former Fire Chief's pension plan in the Wall Street Journal. Like many of you, I was shocked at how generous the Board had been with our tax dollars. In these uncertain times, we need someone who is willing to make tough economic decisions to protect our fire district and our tax dollars. We are fortunate that Bob Jungbluth is challenging an incumbent for a seat on the MOFD Board.

I served with Bob on the Orinda Planning Commission for a number of years and know he makes informed decisions, and is fair to both the needs of the applicant and the community. He has played a substantial role in streamlining the planning process so that it is easier and more user friendly for our residents. Most importantly, I know him to respect the economic circumstances of both the applicant and the community, and he is diligent in trying to minimize financial impacts on both.

I believe Bob's awareness of these key issues, and his ability to communicate clearly with staff, applicants, and residents qualifies him to serve on the MOFD Board. I hope you will join me in supporting Bob Jungbluth for MOFD.
Richard Westin

Editor:

As casual observers of the political scene in Orinda, we were truly saddened to see that FAIR has decided to embark on a smear campaign against John Wyro who is running for re-election to the MOFD Board, representing our district. John Wyro has served the community of Orinda for decades on the Orinda School Board, the Acalanes Education Fund Board, the old Orinda Fire District Board, the Orinda Infrastructure Committee, and the MOFD Board. He was twice selected as an Orinda Association "Volunteer of the Year." He also serves on the board of the Oakland Museum. As our MOFD board member, he has voted for the replacement of Station 44 on Moraga Way in Orinda and for seismic upgrades to our other two Orinda stations, as well as the replacement of our dilapidated fire-fighting equipment. He has focused on managing the MOFD's financial resources. Instead of thanking him for his service to our community, FAIR has chosen to mount a shabby campaign attacking his integrity.

We are voting for John Wyro because he is a proven leader and we need his experience in these difficult economic times. We trust him to help make sure our emergency services are there when we need them.

Bob and Patty Frazer
Orinda

Editor:

I ask the voters in Moraga/Orinda Fire District 4 to support John Wyro for re-election. During my time as an Orinda City Council Member, including as Mayor and now currently as Vice Mayor, I have had the pleasure of working collaboratively with John to address public safety issues. John and I worked alongside each other on two campaigns to find additional revenue to fix Orinda's roads, drains, and water pipes. John has been a strong advocate for keeping local control of fire and emergency service in our local community, when others have sought to dissolve the district, meaning that we would revert to having emergency services and fire provided by the County, without local ambulance or paramedic service in Orinda. In a time when our local revenues are under attack by the state, and when property tax revenues are either static or declining, it is very important that we retain a board member who is fiscally prudent and extremely experienced, so that effective and timely fire, paramedic and ambulance service are provided locally to our community. Please vote for John Wyro for the Moraga/Orinda Fire District Board on November 2.

Victoria Smith
Orinda

Editor:

Vote for Bob Jungbluth for MOFD Board

We need someone on the board who will exhibit some fiscal constraint. I think Bob Jungbluth can be that person. In the 13 years that John Wyro has been on the MOFD board:

- Orinda taxpayers have increased taxes to MOFD from \$5 million to \$11 million, growing at over twice the rate of inflation.
- The fire district now spends almost \$20 million per year; more money than Orinda and Moraga combined. No other city in the Bay Area spends that much of its budget on emergency services; and the services we get are good but no better than our neighbors.
- While the fire district has spent \$170 million in taxes over those 13 years, they have also accrued \$85 million in

debt and unfunded pension liabilities - 50 cents of debt for every dollar spent. When is this going to stop?

The pension bonus that the board gave to retiring Chief Nowicki last year, which they said they were unaware they were doing, is going to cost the taxpayers another \$3 million dollars over the chief's retirement.

It is time for a change. We need someone new to look after our tax dollars. Please vote for Bob Jungbluth for MOFD board. Thank you.

Rose Anne Critchfield

Orinda

Lafayette Candidates

Editor:

Retain Valuable Leadership on the Lafayette School Board Teresa Gerringer and Art Kapoor are dedicated, knowledgeable and thoughtful members of the Lafayette School Board and I would like to urge the voters of Lafayette to return them to the Board. Lafayette School District's record of success, in the face of unprecedented budget reductions, is testament to fine leadership they have provided.

The Lafayette Schools are known for their excellence. Our facilities are up to date, our fiscal management is conservative, and our financial position is strong. The children of Lafayette continue to benefit from low class sizes and a holistic curriculum that incorporates specialized instruction in art, music and science.

The challenges facing schools in the next several years are large, and the learning curve for a new board member is long. Our children will be best served by keeping these seasoned board members who understand the nuances and complexities of the challenges ahead.

It is clear that Lafayette residents view their schools as an asset. Make sure they remain an asset - Reelect Art and Teresa.

Ann Appert

Lafayette

Editor:

Change can be good...when needed. However, the City of Lafayette is currently well managed and in good fiscal shape, considering the economic times we are facing. Not many cities can make that claim and things are going to get tougher because of the State's economy and budget crisis. We can attribute the excellent health of our city to the current City Council members. The leadership that Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin have exhibited during their last terms of offices, such as maintaining balanced city budgets with realistic reserves, the funding and construction of a beautiful new library, securing and preserving open space and our ridge lines, and a reduction in the number of failed roads throughout the city, prove that they can manage successfully through tough times and work with a wide variety of interest groups. They are council members for the entire city, not just the vocal few. Their open mindedness, fairness and experience cannot be easily replaced. Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin have maintained their passion for Lafayette and wish to continue to share with us their time and expertise. So, why would we make a change? Why would we elect someone with an unproven track record when we have two stellar, proven candidates in Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin? Lafayette is working, and working well! Why change?

Cheryl Noll

Lafayette

Editor:

Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin are strong advocates for the long-term best interests of Lafayette and its residents, and I fully support their re-election to the Lafayette City Council.

Brandt and Don have been essential catalysts in making Lafayette what it is today. Long-term residents have seen the improvements through the years; new residents have chosen Lafayette because of those improvements. Neither Brandt nor Don would begin to claim that they are solely responsible. We are a city fortunate to have many community-minded volunteers, great schools, an active business community and an active faith community, and what has been accomplished is the work of many. But the city council needs to provide the civic leadership, and Brandt and Don have been strong leaders.

These are not easy times. All cities are facing fiscal challenges. Lafayette is in better shape than most because of the prudent policies adopted by the city council, but there are many hard decisions that must be made. Brandt and Don have shown that they can make the hard decisions. But most important, they have shown that when they make decisions, they listen carefully to all viewpoints, they bring to their decision making their broad professional experience and civic experience, and then they base their decisions on what is best for Lafayette.

Lafayette has been well-served by having Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin on the city council. Please keep them working for us the next four years.

Carl Anduri

Lafayette

Editor:

I urge all residents of Lafayette to vote for incumbents Don Tatzin and Brandt Andersson for City Council. They have worked hard and long for all of us and they deserve our support. Unlike many cities, Lafayette holds a AAA bond

rating and does not have pension problems dragging down its finances. We also have a beautiful library and ample amounts of open space. All these wonderful attributes were provided under the careful and watchful eyes of these two Councilmembers. I was so sad to see one candidate, Traci Reilly, resort to distasteful and incorrect criticism of these Councilmembers in an effort to gain votes. Please help me in retaining our fair, open-minded and honest incumbents in office.

Pattie Tinley
Lafayette

Editor:

This letter is in support of Lafayette City Council Candidates Don Tatzin and Brandt Andersson, and at the same time critical of campaign information disseminated by challenger Traci Reilly.

I know Don and Brandt to be excellent council members who are hard working, respectful of differing viewpoints and accessible to residents of Lafayette. This is opposite of what Reilly points to in her campaign material; she refers to them as "entrenched and insular." That characterization is unfair, unkind and inaccurate.

The city of Lafayette enjoys financial stability because of thoughtful management by the council and staff. Reilly's literature says that the city projects "huge deficits in 3-5 years." This is a half-truth that doesn't recognize that the city has long-range forecasting and makes mid-course corrections as needed. As a result, the City has run General Fund surpluses for the past 10 years. In addition the City has ample reserves.

Lafayette's redevelopment agency can be credited with upgrading and improving the quality of life in our downtown, and for being part of the funding package for the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center and Veteran's Memorial building. Reilly's advertisements charge the city with "wasteful spending" and borrowing with "low bond ratings." In fact, Lafayette is one of 169 cities nationally with a AAA credit rating. The RDA's latest bond was rated "A."

Reilly said the Redevelopment Agency is "out of business," but that is playing fast and loose with the facts. Yes, the State took redevelopment funds from all cities this year, but the RDA will receive more tax money next year, and for 14 more years.

The library is a wonderful asset to the community. The project did, in fact, require a General Plan Amendment to increase height limits along Golden Gate Way. Candidate Reilly's material paints with a broad brush; it claims the city amended the general plan eight times in the past eight years "in favor of higher density and increased height limits." On the surface that would sound irresponsible, unless the context for each decision is taken into account.

I've learned over the years that it's best to try to correct misinformation promptly and directly. Before writing this letter I addressed some of these points personally to candidate Reilly at the candidates' night at the community center, specifically concerning her misinformation about the Redevelopment Agency, and asked that she correct her campaign information. She chose to ignore that request.

Sincerely,
Anne Grodin
Lafayette

Editor:

I urge you to vote for Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin for Lafayette City Council. Both men have proven themselves to be intelligent, effective, hard-working, responsible public servants. They approach situations with astute insight, balanced and thoughtful reasoning and clear understanding of the needs and values of our community. These challenging times call for the type of capable leadership which Brandt and Don provide.

Sincerely,
Janet Thomas
Lafayette

Editor:

I have had the privilege of working closely with Brandt Andersson on Lafayette's Environmental Task Force. I've found Brandt to be a highly intelligent, thoughtful, diplomatic leader who knows how to listen and can make sense of complex issues. The bottom line is that I trust his judgement and rest easy knowing that he's helping to make smart decisions for Lafayette.

Brandt's dedication and experience serving the community is truly impressive and I sense that he cares deeply about the quality of life in Lafayette. Prior to serving on the Council, Brandt was Director of the Lafayette Community Foundation, Chair of the Lamorinda Trails Committee, and Chair of the Lafayette Public Safety Implementation Committee.

I hear complaints about city council members from friends in other cities, but I don't have any. On the contrary, I feel incredibly lucky and grateful to have such a highly effective city council, who have combined prudent management of city funds, with great accomplishments like the new Library and Acalanes Ridge acquisition, and constant improvements downtown. Lafayette is truly a thriving city compared to other similar cities and the current council deserves some of the credit.

I urge Lafayette residents to re-elect Brandt Andersson to the Lafayette City Council.

Thanks,
Steve Richard
Lafayette

Editor:

I am writing to support Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin for Lafayette City Council. I believe their ability to manage Lafayette's finances prudently and thoughtfully both historically and going forward will serve Lafayette well in this critical period of challenging economic times.

In 2008, I served as Chair of the Lafayette Finance Review Committee. Following months of rigorous review and analysis by our resident committee, we found Lafayette has generally done a very good job of identifying and capturing opportunities to manage the taxpayer's money with prudence without significantly altering the provision of city services. In fact, the city has identified and executed several impressive projects by leveraging outside sources of revenue, requiring very little if any general fund dollars. In addition, the committee found that Lafayette's expenditures are in line with peer cities and in some instances, Lafayette appears to be more fiscally prudent than many of the cities in our study.

The Committee did identify cost reduction opportunities, and recommended the city pursue some but not all of these opportunities, weighing the cost savings against the risk of lost or reduced services to the community. The City Council implemented many of our recommendations, including using parking revenue to maintain the downtown, renegotiating contracts at lower rates with many vendors, adopting a mandatory staff furlough, analyzing options for acquiring police services from another provider, and directing city commissions to fund more of their activities themselves.

There is certainly more work to be done and I am confident that Brandt and Don will lead the effort to spend the money available to the City wisely. I encourage my fellow residents to re-elect Don and Brandt to the Lafayette City Council.

Daniel Deitrick
Lafayette

Editor:

In Lafayette's upcoming City Council election, Brandt Andersson and Don Tatzin offer leadership proven through accomplishments that have protected and enhanced our town and the lives of its citizens.

In these difficult economic times, Lafayette has remained fiscally sound with consistently balanced budgets and healthy reserves. We have a vibrant downtown supported by public landscaping and parking. We have protected hillsides, conserving the landscape that is so much part of our identity. We have a first class library serving all generations with innovative learning programs. We have new community institutions, like our recently initiated Farmers Market, which bring neighbors together. Each is a remarkable accomplishment and the result of the committed, quiet, thoughtful, and open leadership demonstrated by Brandt and Don.

Don brings tremendous experience and knowledge to the Council. He has consistently worked for the values that make Lafayette the community that it is. He chaired the committee that developed the regulations that now protect our hills. He provided the leadership that brought our community together to build our new Lafayette Library.

Having served on many volunteer citizen committees with Brandt, I have seen first hand the qualities I expect of a candidate for Lafayette's City Council. He is a person of integrity and values, first of which is a commitment to listen and bring together diverse points of view in solving problems. We need leaders who can weave together the varied interests in our community, who see the common thread in the many voices of our town. It was Brandt who defined the concept of a semi-rural community for Orinda, a value that I have seen him promote in governing Lafayette. His work on Lafayette's Environmental Task Force, from which the Farmer's Market emerged, has worked to give Lafayette a sustainable future.

For Lafayette, the challenge lies in what seems like an increasingly unsure future. Wise, thoughtful, experienced leadership has never been more important. Brandt and Don bring precisely that and I urge my neighbors and fellow citizens to support them on election day.

Tom Chastain
Lafayette

Editor:

As longtime community volunteers and former elected officials, we both share a keen interest in our community and its leadership. We have each had the opportunity to work with our Mayor, Brandt Andersson and Council Member Don Tatzin in varied situations, from library fundraisers to community liaison meetings to city council meetings. We have always found them both well-informed on all topics related to Lafayette's city government. They are creative and cooperative in developing solutions to all problems that arise, and are always open to differing viewpoints regardless of the source. It is clear that they see themselves as part of a governing team that includes not only their fellow council members and Lafayette's many commissions and committees, but community groups and citizens. Lafayette has a tradition of cooperative, creative government, and Brandt and Don are a key part of that successful tradition. We are pleased to support them for re-election to the Lafayette City Council and urge our fellow citizens to support them as well.

Judy Carney, Mary McCosker
Lafayette

Moraga Candidates

Editor:

I am writing to proudly support Ken Chew for re-election to the Moraga Town Council. I believe Mr. Chew to be a tireless and an almost unbelievably dedicated volunteer in service of the people of the Town of Moraga. I have seen him at all the events around town that I have attended or participated in myself. I am grateful for Ken's support of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce where I serve as a volunteer.

Ken's achievements while serving on the Town Council are many and vital. As this year's mayor Ken has presided over a balanced budget. He has begun the process of evaluation and potential enactment of recommendations of the Revenue Enhancement Committee. He has engaged Kimco as they've reorganized their ownership of the Rheem Park Center. He has begun the process to update the Town's website. He is involved, along with the Chamber of Commerce, in bringing St. Mary's College more into the life of the town. He has overseen the completion of the Moraga Center Specific Plan. Did I mention his involvement with the Hacienda, the Moraga School District and our police protection? And he does all this with a full time job and family to care for.

Please vote to re-elect Ken Chew.

Larry Tessler

Moraga

Editor

The Town of Moraga needs Dave Trotter on the Town Council. In my dealing with Dave over the years I've always found him to be an individual who is capable of looking for solutions to problems that often polarize the Town. He exhibits the essential traits necessary for a Town official. Dave takes the time to be knowledgeable about the issues and respectful of differing points of views. Too often issues become emotional and it's important to have members of the Town Council who can rise above fray and create common sense solutions. This is why I will be casting my vote for Dave Trotter for Town Council.

Christina DaRodda

Moraga

Orinda Candidates

Editor:

I urge your vote to re-elect Sue Severson for Orinda City Council.

Sue is a tireless citizen leader who has been dedicated to building a strong community for the 20+ years I have lived in Orinda. Her service on the Orinda City Council for the past four years have been a logical extension of many years of service on the Orinda School Board, Orinda school parent club boards, and church and humanitarian service.

As a member of the City Council, Sue has been unique for her personal efforts to increase ongoing communications that build strong communities. She regularly sends emails about issues in our community, to encourage citizens and families to reach out and get involved in Orinda Clean-Up Days and other community service events and celebrations.

Sue is hard-working, thorough, meticulous, and frugal. She is well-equipped to balance strategic initiatives with an understanding of the nuts and bolts needed to get the job done efficiently and cost-effectively. In a small town with very limited resources, we need City Council members who can justify priorities and funding obligations to keep Orinda a thriving, vital community.

Re-elect Sue Severson.

Diane Oshima

Orinda

Editor:

For the 8 years I have known Sarah Butler, she has been actively involved with Orinda schools, working long and hard to help the children and the community. Sarah has demonstrated year after year her passion for making Orinda schools better. She is the most knowledgeable and active person running for the School Board.

As a former Parents Club President of Glorietta Elementary School, I had the opportunity to work with Sarah. She consistently volunteered to help on issue after issue. She had a good attention for detail, and would tirelessly work on issues until they were resolved.

Sarah has experience at all educational levels - class room volunteer, Parents Club Board Member, active leader for EFO and both Measure A and Measure B, Co-Chair of the Las Trampas State Legislative Team - and much more. She has done it all - and still has the passion to give her all to the School Board. She knows the issues facing the Orinda Unified School District, and is prepared to take action.

Sarah Butler would be an outstanding School Board member - that is why I, and my husband Bruce, are supporting her and ask that you do too!

Diane Ramsey

Orinda

Editor:

Those of us in Orinda have an opportunity to impact the future of our children by voting for three new members of the School Board. Julie Rossiter is a candidate who we believe should get your vote.

Julie is extremely hard-working. She has been actively involved in Orinda schools, volunteering in a variety of roles for the Parents' Club at Del Rey. She is thoughtful and analytical - skills that are key for addressing the current and future challenges in our district. With increasing budget constraints, there are no easy fixes. It will take innovation

and collaboration. Julie is well-suited for the job - she brings the necessary skills, plus a proven ability to solve problems. As a Board member, she will be a good listener and communicator, and will work effectively with all constituents.

Julie's slogan, "Committed to Excellence," is an apt description. We believe that Julie will be a committed school board member, who will strive to represent the community, and who will work hard to maintain and improve our excellent schools.

Julia & Chris Stenzel
Orinda

Editor:

As parents of children in the Orinda schools, we have had the opportunity to work alongside many parents, teachers, school board members and district administrators in our community. We have all been involved in leadership positions within our schools and community supporting education.

Several of us attended the candidates for the Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees forum last week and walked away concerned about the confrontational approach of some of the candidates. While there is always room for improvement and opportunities to think "outside the box" to bring efficiencies to our district, it would be very destructive for our community and our schools for board members to bring a negative attitude to this process. It has only been through hard work, respect and partnership that our school district has weathered these tough budget years with many programs and small class sizes intact. Though there are areas for improvement, our district is not broken.

With this in mind, we whole-heartedly endorse Julie Rossiter, Chris Severson and Sarah Butler for OUSD Board of Trustees. We believe these individuals are smart, thoughtful and collaborative. While they are not opposed to new ideas and taking a hard look within our own walls, they will work toward solutions in a positive way. More tough decisions lie ahead for our schools, and we strongly feel the OUSD will be in a more sound and productive place with these individuals working on behalf of our children.

We urge you to support these candidates on Election Day.

Mindy Becker, Wendy Bond, Courtney Chandler, Amber Gates, Joan Kiekhaefer, Yosh Neugebauer, Janet Riley, Shauna Simmonds
Orinda

Editor:

With regard to the proposed Downtown Plan to raise the building height in Orinda on the block that includes our most vibrant area of commercialism (which includes Nation's, Europa Hof Brau, our Hardware Store, Loard's Ice Cream to name a few that would be demolished, never to return, should this Downtown Plan be enacted) it's easy to sit back in an armchair and say, "wait, I don't like that plan and we should be not Re-Develop under the guise of "Revitalize" our downtown with multi-story condos and cookie cutter retailers that have no relevance to me." It is another thing altogether to say that, and then actually do something about it, like what Scott Zeller is doing.

Zeller is an experienced leader, trustworthy, and believes the future of Orinda is best decided by the majority of all people in Orinda collectively versus a small group. With his help, we can have a real "revitalization" with improved storefront facades, more greenery, and a boost to small businesses that are indeed relevant to our community.

We have five candidates running for Orinda City Council, and each voter may select up to three on the ballot.

Scott Zeller has my vote, and hopefully one of yours to preserve all of the semi-rural characteristics that enticed me, and perhaps you, to move to Orinda.

Respectfully,
Susan Winchester
Orinda

Editor:

I ask the voters in Moraga/Orinda Fire District 4 to support John Wyro for re-election. During my time as an Orinda City Council Member, including as Mayor and now currently as Vice Mayor, I have had the pleasure of working collaboratively with John to address public safety issues. John and I worked alongside each other on two campaigns to find additional revenue to fix Orinda's roads, drains, and water pipes. John has been a strong advocate for keeping local control of fire and emergency service in our local community, when others have sought to dissolve the district, meaning that we would revert to having emergency services and fire provided by the County, without local ambulance or paramedic service in Orinda. In a time when our local revenues are under attack by the state, and when property tax revenues are either static or declining, it is very important that we retain a board member who is fiscally prudent and extremely experienced, so that effective and timely fire, paramedic and ambulance service are provided locally to our community. Please vote for John Wyro for the Moraga/Orinda Fire District Board on November 2.

Victoria Smith
Orinda

Editor:

Tyson Krumholz, my stepson, is running for Orinda School Board. He is extremely bright, has his Bachelor of Science

Degree in Civil Engineering from Cal and is a licensed Professional Engineer. In his position as Senior Project Manager with Webcor Builders in San Francisco, he manages project budgets in the multi millions and has experience working with many governmental agencies with their inherent bureaucratic constraints. Tyson has successfully achieved positive outcomes for numerous Bay Area construction projects. Tyson has two young children in the Orinda Schools. His wife taught for several years in the Orinda School system. Tyson's mother, my wife, taught math and science for 30-years, the last 12 years she taught math and science at Orinda Intermediate School. Tyson has been involved with the Orinda Schools since his first child was enrolled in school at Wagner Ranch Elementary. He has attended School Board meetings for the past 3 years, done volunteer work at Wagner Ranch, and believes great education is essential for a vibrant and productive society. I am a very proud step father and I urge all to vote for Tyson Krumholz for the Orinda School Board.

William E. Wilbur, DDS

Orinda

Editor:

Be Truly Informed Before Voting on November 2.

We have just finished reading the Lamorinda Weekly's Letters to the Editors (dated October 13) and are concerned with the negative tone of some of the submissions regarding the OUSD Board candidates. Voters are best served by hearing what the candidates stand for, their thoughtful opinions regarding the issues, and their ability to ultimately make decisions as to which candidates will best serve our CHILDREN, not the adults. A member of our family attended the Candidate Forum on October 7th, and we just reviewed key points that were posted online by the League of Women Voters. We have also read the Lamorinda Weekly's impartial review of the Candidate Forum (dated October 13, which stated that only 70 people attended) and it is clear that some candidates had 'done their homework', and others had not. It was obvious that some candidates clearly understood the complexity of the issues and cited concrete examples and solutions, had consistently attended OUSD Board meetings to observe the Board process, and had made intelligent, reality-based assessments in order to prepare thoughtful recommendations. Several candidates merely repeated or paraphrased questions, and agreed or disagreed with positions without presenting new perspectives or personal interpretation, which showed a lack of preparation and commitment to a critical position that simply cannot be given away. What the OUSD Board desperately needs is diversity of thought and opinion, and a willingness on the part of its members to challenge themselves, our administrators, teachers, parents and children to excel - to reach beyond even the Orinda standards - in innovative and new ways that give our kids the tools to be successful and valuable citizens. Extraordinary times require extraordinary leadership, and for the first time in many years we have a competitive race that allows for the issues and our children's futures to be openly and honestly discussed. We feel that OUSD board candidates Bekki Van Voorhis-Gilbert and Tyson Krumholz are both uniquely qualified to provide skillful leadership to navigate through these challenging times and position our schools for the future. Their presence on the Board will benefit all students, all schools and all perspectives.

Charles and Doaa Vollmar

Orinda

Dear Orinda Community,

I would like to encourage you to consider voting for Bekki Gilbert and Tyson Krumholz for Orinda School Board. I believe that both will bring a positive, new perspective to the board. I was dismayed when I attended recent school board meetings and found that there was little transparency re: decisions and minimal communication with constituents. I had the impression, particularly re: the issue of whether to maintain the naturalist at the nature area or to fund the school librarians, that the decision had already been made prior to hearing from the public. I realize that no school board can please everyone, but I do feel that is important to listen and to have an open mind when addressing the important issues that our schools face.

Finally, I believe that both Bekki Gilbert and Tyson Krumholz will work hard to have good communication and will be thoughtful, independent voices on the Orinda School Board.

Wendi Leonard, Ph.D.

Orinda

Editor:

I attended the October 7th Orinda School Board forum where five candidates fielded questions from the audience and discussed why they decided to run for the Board. Two candidates in particular stood out - Bekki Van Voorhis-Gilbert and Tyson Krumholz. Both were realistic, fair, spoke honestly and respectfully about issues regarding the OUSD Board and backed their claims with research and community survey data. Bekki and Tyson (the only two candidates NOT endorsed by the current OUSD Board) appeared to be the only ones willing to take a stand on tough issues.

A few days after the debate, I received a community-wide email, complaining that the "non-Board- approved" candidates were confrontational and negative during the debate - a criticism intending to discredit these two candidates who offered innovative solutions to legitimate problems. I encourage the community to watch the forum posted on YouTube (search under Orinda School Board) and decide which of the candidates will best support our schools.

A word of caution about the current OUSD Board and their goal of gaining new Board members they can influence. I discovered that over the past 12 months, all five current OUSD board members voted exactly the same way 129 out of 131 times. I question any board that collectively votes alike 99% of the time. Will voting for the three OUSD-

approved members - Julie Rossiter, Sarah Butler and Chris Severson - provide our community with a Board capable of identifying and addressing difficult challenges in a balanced way? You decide. You can view OUSD's voting record and meeting minutes on the OUSD web site at www.orindaschools.org (under District Info., Board of Trustees, Board Minutes).

I'm voting for Bekki Van Voorhis-Gilbert and Tyson Krumholz because they are not afraid to stand up for what's right, they speak up when improvements are needed and advocate for our children's best interests.

Lisa Copass
Orinda

Editor:

The disturbing opinion offered by Jim Landau in your last edition presents such a bitter characterization of School Board candidate Bekki Van Vooris-Gilbert that I was prompted to view the video of the OUSD Candidates Forum firsthand.

The YouTube video clearly contradicts Mr. Landau's misrepresentation of Bekki's intentions and behavior. Bekki stood out as a leader among the candidates attending this forum. During this event, she presented her thoughtful views in the context of her personal experience as a parent volunteer, her research on practical improvements to tighten OUSD's operational efficiencies and her execution of parent and community surveys. Bekki was informed, intelligent and forthright in her responses and, judging from her comments, I believe she was the most prepared and qualified candidate. In several instances, she touched upon key areas where OUSD might consider improvements. That's the kind of leadership I expect from our school board members!

Mr. Landau will have you believe that Bekki arrived at the Candidate's Forum with an agenda, however, in reviewing details of this event, I'd say Mr. Landau is the real culprit sowing distrust, disunity and wasting time with his distasteful attempt at smearing an exceptional candidate who is highly qualified, well informed on current issues facing our schools and proactively advocating for the best interests of our children and their education. There's no basis for Landau's destructive comments.

Remarkably, our current board members voted together on 129 out of 131 issues in 2010, including approval of administrative bonuses in the face of severe budget cuts and new parcel taxes. Considering these actions, it's hard to imagine how anyone would pay attention to the rubber stamp candidate endorsements offered by this group. We need new, responsible leadership possessing the courage and tenacity to challenge the status quo and act progressively in addressing the complex, difficult issues our schools face every year.

I've lived in Orinda for 45 years. My siblings and I all attended the Orinda schools as did my children. I understand from direct experience that our schools are far from perfect and stand to enjoy significant benefit from the leadership Bekki Van Vooris-Gilbert will provide when elected. Please support Bekki's candidacy for OUSD School Board with your vote.

John Gripp
Orinda

Editor:

Will our children get a 21st Century education to launch them towards maintaining the Orinda lifestyle? Towards their future happiness and success? I'm deeply invested in the answers as a science teacher at Orinda Intermediate School, and as a parent of a Miramonte senior.

The OUSD school board sets policy, hires the superintendent and everything rains down from there to our classrooms. The board has tremendous potential to move Orinda's good schools towards great schools that could be leaders in the state, not just in test scores, but in student motivation and cutting edge use of technology in motivating student projects.

We need some changes, at least in pace. The rather contentious board race is great - it gets us all thinking about what we want for our children's education. I'm all for debate but I'm dismayed to see the personal attacks against two candidates.

Bekki VanVoorhis-Gilbert has made tremendous efforts to reach out to teachers and teachers. She's attended every board meeting. I find her deeply principled, compassionate and committed to the greater good of our community and our children. She listens well, she's smart and well-informed. Bekki has my endorsement!

Sue Boudreau
(Orinda teacher)
El Sobrante

Editor:

There is a reason that Julie Rossiter has been endorsed by all five members of the Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees. She is imminently qualified and will represent the diverse interests of all Orinda residents. Julie's three children span the age spectrum from pre-kindergarten to middle school so she has a vested interest ensuring all levels of Orinda schools are of the highest quality. She has the tenacity, determination and professional skills to tackle the complex funding and policy issues the district will confront over the next few years. Please join me in voting for Julie Rossiter on November 2nd.

Sincerely,
Valerie Lewis
Orinda

Editor:

We are writing in support of Sarah Butler for the Orinda Union School District Governing Board. We have known Sarah as an involved parent at both Glorietta and OIS. She is informed, involved and has the students' interests in mind. Sarah has a working knowledge of the broad range of issues that our schools face and how they affect the classroom. Her passion and sustained dedication to our students makes her uniquely qualified to be an excellent addition to the OUSD school board. Please join us in voting for Sarah Butler on Nov. 2nd.

Thank you.

Mark and Marcie Tuttle

Orinda

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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