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## Moraga's New Town Council

By Sophie Braccini



Photo Clay Serrahn

As the November election results were certified during the December 8th Town Council meeting, Moraga got itself a new Council that very much resembles the old one. To no one's surprise, Council Member Karen Mendonca succeeds Ken Chew as Mayor, and Mike Metcalf will now sit in the Vice-Mayor's seat. Although the Moraga Town Council was once known for its acrimonious meetings, the gracious statements made by each council member suggest that this Council will be one of Moraga's most civil.

The Council rallied around Mendonca to wish her well as she stepped up to the Mayor-ship. Howard Harpham, who could not be present that evening, sent a letter that summarized the Council's consensus. "I support incoming Mayor Karen Mendonca... (and) am looking forward to working closely with (her) to accomplish even more in 2011," he wrote, "Karen has demonstrated that she thinks clearly and holds the interest of the Town at heart."

Chew delivered a short and good-humored address. "It's been the opportunity of a life time," he said, "I enjoyed every moment of it." He particularly thanked staff members for their support, adding that he was "just the guy in the picture," while they do all the hard work. Mendonca presented him with a framed gavel as a keepsake.

Vice-Mayor Metcalf congratulated Mendonca, "I think that you are going to be a terrific Mayor," he said. Metcalf encouraged new Town Manager Jill Keimach to continue the momentum of reforms begun by the previous Manager, and placed a high emphasis on the economic revitalization of the Town.

In her initial address, Mendonca detailed her priorities for the coming year (see side bar). Like Chew, she acknowledged staff and the many Moraga volunteers who serve in roles that are held by paid staff in wealthier local governments.

Moraga's frugality allows the Town to have a balanced

operational budget, but does not provide for needed infrastructure maintenance. Finding new sources of revenue to tackle that difficult issue will be one of the new Mayor's top priorities.

### Mayor Karen Mendonca's 15 Goals for 2011 Fiscal

- Develop and implement a balanced budget
- Establish a 5-year financial strategy plan
- Increase the general fund balance/reserve to 50% (now at 43%) of the Operating Budget
- Increase outside funding and grants for streets and storm drain improvements

### Economic Development / Environment

- Work with the economic development team to help create a streamlined business approval process
- Outreach with the community to identify its priority for infrastructure investment and economic development
- Create a vision for the Rheem Center with the community
- Establish a task force to begin a climate change action plan or greenhouse reduction strategy (AB 32)

### Building Project/Partnering

- 329 Rheem : finish retrofit design, planning , bid,

start building

- Camino Pablo field, work to be completed in summer 2011
- Partner with SMC on student housing, recreation, sesquicentennial celebration, and support their effort to host a presidential debate in 2012
- Partner with the New Rheem Theatre, teen dances and California Independent Film Festival.

Communication

- Redesign the web site to expand its audience.
- Web streaming or videotaping of Council Meetings
- Continue and enhance a consistent practice of civility in public meeting

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