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Stephanie Hom Arrives as Moraga's New Administrative Services Director

By Sophie Braccini



Stephanie Hom near her office at the Hacienda de las Flores Photo Sophie Braccini

Something about Moraga just keeps pulling talent through the tunnel. The first to arrive was Town Manager Jill Keimach, from Berkeley; then came Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read, from Oakland. The newest arrival is Stephanie Hom, also of Oakland, who recently began work as Moraga's Administrative Services Director.

The three women didn't know each other before, but they have a few things in common - they are all professional, working mothers, and they chose public service because of a belief that serving the greater good is a worthy cause. Hom says she chose Moraga because she wanted to be part of a strong team of dedicated people.

Hom was born in southern California to parents who emigrated from Hong Kong after leaving southern China. She says her call to public service began during her college years when she volunteered with Upward Bound, a non-profit that supports inner-city youth on their way to college - in talking with other volunteers, she began to understand the key role that good implementation plays in the success of sensible political decisions.

"If the implementation, or administrative side, is not up to par when decisions are made, change does not happen," she says, "budgeting, planning, and organizing are the key to success."

When Hom went to Columbia University for her master's degree, she chose Public Administration over International Affairs because she wanted to have an impact close to home.

For 18 years Hom worked for the City of Oakland, mostly in finance and budget, with a three-year gap while working in the private sector. Her last position was as Director of Administrative Services for the Public Works Department that, according to her, worked like clockwork.

"Life is about learning, growing and new perspectives," she says, "I wanted to get a fresh viewpoint on bureaucratic processes." Hom chose Moraga, where she will be challenged to work the small details of everyday operations as well as formalizing the big financial picture for the Town.

"One of the objectives of the Council this year is to create a long term strategic financial plan and an investment policy," she says, "I look forward to meeting the community and establishing such plans." For Hom, strategies are not created behind closed doors or made to sit on shelves. A big proponent of transparency, she plans to make as much information available to the public as possible, "In a form that's understandable to all," she adds with a smile.

Another big task awaiting her is participating in the work of the Revenue Enhancement Community for Outreach to Neighborhoods (RECON). "I believe that one of the reasons I was recruited to this job is that I participated in similar projects for the City of Oakland, such as a bond measure to improve the structure around Lake Merritt and the estuary," says Hom. She knows that RECON's task, to find a way to finance the town's infrastructure maintenance, is a challenge. "All over the USA, people don't fix the roads until they're broken, even if it costs ten times more to delay the maintenance," she says.

The new Director knows from experience that one of the challenges of public service is that it takes a consensus, or at least a strong majority, to effect change. "Sometimes projects fail, and it is important to understand why, assess the weak points and learn from it." Hom says she believes in building that consensus and addressing concerns beforehand, through dialogue and transparency - and she is prepared to step out of her office to do that, should the need arise.

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