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Civic News Moraga

Moraga Candidates Speak to a Crowd

By Sophie Braccini



A few hundred interested Moraga residents attended the Moraga Citizens Network's Candidates Night. Photos Andy Scheck



Following the Presidential Debate October 3, the place to be the next day was Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church, where more than 300 people came to hear what Moraga Town Council candidates Phil Arth, Seth Freeman, Karen Mendonca and Roger Wykle had to say. For those who missed it, Lamorinda Weekly was there to record the event and the film can be viewed online at www.lamorindaweekly.com and on the Moraga Citizens Network website, moragacitizensnetwork.org.

Current mayor Mike Metcalf was unable to attend. He had charged the debate's moderator, Saint Mary's College's Tim Farley, with reading his statement. Metcalf explained that he could not be there because of an earlier commitment to his wife to take her on a trip that had long been booked and anticipated. He reaffirmed his dedication to serving the town and asked residents to re-elect him for the third time.

Each candidate made a three-minute presentation, then answered 11 questions asked by the public, before offering their closing remarks.

There were issues all candidates agreed upon. For example, all four came out in favor of Measure K, the sales tax for the roads. However, they differed slightly when asked about what they would do if the measure failed. They concurred that the Town had no choice but to seek other sources of funding and they would support asking residents again to approve new taxes, but two of them, Roger Wykle and Seth Freeman, indicated that they would also look for ways to reduce the Town's expenses.

Wykle and Freeman were also in agreement on the question of staff pensions. Where Mendonca and Arth responded to a question on employees' pensions that the Town had no liability at this time, Wykle and Freeman showed preference for 401K plans. Wykle for future hires, while Freeman seemed ready to change current employees' pensions now to 401K plans.

Another question divided the 4 candidates the same way—the issue of off-leash hours at Rancho Laguna Park. Both Wykle and Freeman said that the park had been functioning well without a fence or problems for years and should be left untouched; while Mendonca and Arth firmly stated their preference for a fence to separate dogs from other park users.

The similarities between Wykle and Freeman ended there. Their views regarding development are quite different. Of the 4, Wykle was the candidate most opposed to development, especially in open space. The three other candidates said that Moraga needed to preserve its rural character, and Freeman and Arth also affirmed the right of property owners to develop their land according to the Town's laws. Mendonca added that she was looking forward to a revision of the General Plan's provisions on ridgeline and hillside development as the public indicates what it wants in terms of strengthening current rules.

Mendonca, being the only incumbent at the debate, defended the work done by the Council over the past 4 years.

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Civic News Orinda

Pine Grove Transformation Provides New View from the Top

... continued from page A1



Pine Grove Site Orinda

When JFK announced its intention to close its Pine Grove campus by 2004, the Orinda City Council rezoned the property, setting the stage for Pulte Homes to transform the site yet again – this time from Pine Grove to Orinda Grove.

According to the City's web site, Pulte's "development proposal contained: 80 homes (later revised

to 73 homes), relocation of the City-owned ball fields to the area near the northwesterly corner of the project site, and construction of an approximately 6,000 square foot ... (OUSD) office building to replace the existing District offices on the site."

Now with development finally underway, the view from the top is

changing even more rapidly with each passing week. Most of the rubble of the OUSD administrative offices has already been carted off. Old oak trees are fenced off to help keep them safe. And, at least for the time being, the beloved neon sign of the Orinda Theatre may be easily spotted sparkling brightly across the way.