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Passing the Gavel, Moraga Style

By Sophie Braccini



Ken Chew with Supervisor Candace Andersen Photo
Sophie Braccini

The passing of the gavel on the Moraga Town Council should have been a piece of cake. In 2013 the all-male Town Council worked mostly in unison. The meeting Dec. 11 started with outgoing mayor Dave Trotter saying a few words about the town's accomplishments in 2013 and his anticipation of what would ensue, namely the cooperative work with the school district, Saint Mary's College and Campolindo High School to share sports facilities, and the study of the hillside and ridgeline development rules that may lead to amendments of the General Plan. But when it came time to nominate the next mayor, an awkward silence ensued.

Being mayor does not carry any particular voting privileges and the seat is rotated among elected officials, traditionally in the order of the number of votes received. Four years ago Councilmember Michael Metcalf tried unsuccessfully to convince his colleagues to forgo Ken Chew's rotation to the mayor's seat. And it was indeed Chew's turn again this time, according to the unwritten tradition. When Trotter asked for a nomination of the next mayor, all fell quiet. The mayor reminded his colleagues that he could not nominate someone himself. The heavy silence finally ended when Chew was nominated by Councilmember Phil Arth. On a 4 to 1 vote, with Metcalf

opposed, Chew became the new mayor.

Councilmember Roger Wykle was uneventfully chosen to serve as vice mayor.

Chew spoke about his goals for the coming year. He invited residents to contribute their suggestions to the town's objectives. He highlighted four areas under which the goals should fall: maintain excellence in stewardship; maximize existing resources for enhanced community use; celebrate Moraga's 40th anniversary; and enable the community as a whole to respond to opportunities as they arise.

"I'd like to have a new approach to setting goals for the town," Chew said. "I'd like to work as a team," which includes council members, staff and community. Then he proposed to hold the annual town goal setting session on the evening of Wednesday, Jan. 15 instead of the usual Saturday morning. "This is more respectful of staff and of the public," he noted. Both Metcalf and Trotter expressed concerns about the change. "It is my goal to enable town staff and the town manager to do their jobs," concluded Chew. "We ought to be able to leave them alone sometimes to do their jobs, with a set of goals and directions." The date of the goal setting session is yet to be confirmed.

To provide input regarding the town's objectives contact town manager Jill Keimach, jkeimach@moraga.ca.us or (925) 888-7020.

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