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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I am a road fan, a Moraga road fan. If you rode with me in my car, you'd see me smiling as I bump along Sanders Drive over that roughed up road. I'd tell you how happy I am when I see those big heavy trucks roll into town one after another at 8 in the morning. And I'd tell you that I feel like telling every driver and curb construction guy how grateful I am that they are here in Moraga. We have worked long and hard for this! I don't care if it takes a bit longer to get through town, or if the streets are messy, because in a short while, they'll be smooth, black, and quiet!

If you are a road fan too, join me in cheering the road teams - and all the Moraga voters who said yes to paying one more penny in sales tax. Long live our roads!

Ellen Beans
Moraga

Editor:

Question: Why did the deer cross the road? Answer: Because it wasn't chicken.

It's that time of year when many deer are crossing many Lamorinda roads; time for drivers to be cautious.

A neighbor was rear-ended on Moraga Road when she had to brake to avoid hitting a buck. The car behind her was following too close and/or too fast. Perhaps it is time to consider changing the speed limit on the Rheem-to-Lafayette stretch of Moraga Road, with its several blind curves, from 35 mph to 25 mph.

From the last 35 mph sign at the top of the hill to the first 25 mph sign at the bottom of the hill it is roughly 1.2 miles. At 35 mph it would take approximately 2.1 minutes to drive that distance; at 25 mph it would take approximately 2.9 minutes. While Lamorindans are a busy bunch, perhaps we could sacrifice .8 minute per drive, if we could avoid a few injuries to drivers, deer, and autos.

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Elections

Editor:

It is with great pleasure and honor that we endorse Ken Chew for a third term on the Moraga Town Council. We have known Ken for more than 8 years and are pleased that he is seeking a third term. His service to the Town is marked by selfless dedication to all sectors of the community. What we value most is his readiness to listen and hear out all sides to an issue. And when he makes his decision, we can be confident that he weighed all the pros and cons of an issue and decided for the good of Moraga.

Ken is not captive to vested interests who seek to inject negativity into Moraga politics. He shuns forces who seek to polarize the groups in the community and then actively pit them against one another.

We have not always agreed, but Ken has always listened. It has always been clear that Ken is not a person who will fight for special interests. He will not be defined by the narrow and exclusive political agenda of the few. He actively seeks out both sides to an issue in an effort to make an informed decision. As a trained engineer, facts and accuracy are the tools of his trade. In service to Moraga, his integrity requires that he represent everyone in the community ... not just the loudest in the room who consistently advocate a selfish point of view.

Parity, Integrity, Steadfastness, Reliability ... hallmarks of Ken Chew's service to Moraga. Re-elect Ken Chew!

Sonny and Amalia Ebarle
Moraga

Editor:

I am writing this letter to urge my fellow Lamorinda citizens to support and re-elect Kathy Famulener to the Moraga Orinda Fire District Board. Kathy has worked collaboratively with all stakeholders within the MOFD to ensure we continue to deliver high levels of service in an economically sustainable way. She has spent her career in public safety and understands the community's need for high quality fire and EMS response. In her time as a Board member she has been a valuable asset. She has worked tirelessly to help solve our fiscal challenges in an equitable manner. Kathy is supported by our firefighters, her fellow board members, a broad coalition of local/countywide leaders, and grateful Moraga residents. Please support her election campaign and vote to keep her on our Fire Board.

Mark DeWeese
Moraga

Editor:

MOFD has never found a dollar it couldn't spend.

MOFD just announced that because it has experienced a windfall property tax revenue increase of 8 percent, it will increase its staffing for the rest of the fire season from 17 to 19 firefighters; equivalent to 5.6 firefighters per 10,000 population. ConFire has never had more than about 1.5 firefighters per 10,000 population and, so far, the County has never burned up.

MOFD's tax revenue today is about 2.2 times what it was when it was established in 1997. That is about twice the increase of costs indexed by inflation. On top of this, while spending 240 million tax dollars over those 17 years, they have also accrued about \$100 million of debt and unfunded employee benefit liabilities.

So what do they do when they receive an extra \$400,000 in tax revenues they did not expect? They rush out to spend it in the name of public safety. Back in 2009 they did just the opposite (while running a million dollar deficit) telling the public that extra staffing during red flag days was not really an effective way to spend money they did not have.

What can we do about this? Maybe get someone who understands finance on the Board? MOFD currently has two attorneys on the board (Weil and Famulener). In December Brad Barber (a tax attorney) will be replacing John Wyro (a real estate developer). Do we really need a third attorney? In Moraga, Nathan Bell (a Harvard MBA) is challenging Famulener for the fifth seat on the Board. Maybe a finance guy would be a better choice. It is up to the Moraga voters.

Steve Cohn
Orinda
Editor:

As a former school board member in Orinda, I know what qualities to look for in a school board candidate: a focus on the best education for all students, past experience volunteering in the public schools, and an ability to collaborate well with other board members, with no personal agenda. Being on a school board is hard work, especially when the state is always finding creative ways to cut school funding. I think it's important to have continuity on boards, as well as new ideas, because there is a steep learning curve, and it takes time to understand the many issues a board faces.

Julie Rossiter on the Orinda Union School District board and Susie Epstein on the Acalanes School District board have both done an excellent job. They are dedicated, collaborative, and focused on students. I have known both of them for many years, both as school board members and on the Friends of the Orinda Library board.

I highly recommend both Susie Epstein and Julie Rossiter for re-election to their respective boards in November. They will continue to serve our communities well in maintaining excellence in our schools.

Linda Landau
Orinda

Editor:

In our two years as Glorietta Parents' Club Presidents, we became quite familiar with the Orinda Union School District and its School Board. Our former leadership roles, along with our relationships with the District and Board, give us a unique perspective on what type of candidate would make a successful and valuable Orinda School Board member. Hillary Weiner is that candidate.

Hillary is dedicated to ensuring that Orinda students receive a stellar educational experience, putting politics and special agendas aside, and focusing first and foremost on our youth.

Hillary's multi-leveled involvement within OUSD distinguishes her as a candidate. Her personal experience as an OUSD parent, her community volunteerism, and her leadership roles in education make her uniquely well qualified to take a seat on the Orinda School Board.

Hillary has three children attending OUSD schools, allowing her to be intimately familiar with the current educational issues our schools face and the experiences of our children enrolled at those schools. She has a proven record of dedication to our schools and community through her willingness to, year after year, serve in whatever volunteer role was most needed at Glorietta. These volunteer roles allowed her to learn what parents, teachers and students value most in education. Hillary also has behind-the-scenes knowledge and leadership experience from having served as a Glorietta Parents' Club President. In this role, she proved that she can serve as a strong voice advocating for our students, working at the District level to ask probing questions and thoughtfully consider varying opinions. There could not have been a more well-suited parent to step into that leadership role, and there is certainly no more exceptional candidate to serve on the Orinda School Board.

We feel so fortunate to have a candidate like Hillary step up to represent the best interests of our Orinda students, and we strongly encourage voters to elect her to the Orinda School Board this November.

Darien Destino and Julie Chinn
Orinda

Editor:

I am writing in support of Kristen Correll, a candidate for the AUHSD School Board in the upcoming election November 4th. I have been a resident of Orinda since August 2003. My son is a senior at Miramonte High School and My daughter graduated in June 2013 from Miramonte. I have worked with Kristen at many school and Parents' Club functions and we have become close personal friends over the last five years.

With four children, each of whom have different learning styles and needs, Kristen understands the importance of educating the whole child and creating an environment that fosters and develops well-balanced, confident individuals. In addition, Kristen has over 25 years of experience in education, as a teacher, an administrator and an education specialist. She therefore understands the value and challenges of providing programs for the broad spectrum of students in school - advanced, average and special needs. I strongly believe that Kristen will be a valuable addition to the AUHSD School Board, not only because of her experience but because she is compassionate, even-tempered and capable of working with others in a responsible and measured way. While she stands up for her beliefs, she also appreciates all sides of an issue and will effectively resolve conflicts with compromise and reason.

With the introduction of Common Core and continued budget cuts from the state, Kristen will bring intellectual depth and professional breadth to the Board. As both an educator and a parent, and with children who have attended both Miramonte and Campolindo, I am confident that Kristen will effectively balance the interests of the district's staff, students and parent communities.

Sharon Noble
Orinda

Editor:

Orinda is fortunate to have Carlos Baltodano as a candidate for its City Council. I well know that he is a very caring and responsible citizen of Orinda, as I am his neighbor. His deep love of Orinda has been quite evident to me in our 10 years of "back fence" conversations.

Carlos is extremely well-qualified for the City Council. He spent 6 years on the Orinda Planning Commission, including serving as its Chairman. His bachelor's degree from U.C. Berkeley is in architecture, and his master's degree there is in City Planning. His entire career has been in public service, during which he helped develop the Orinda Dept. of Building Inspection.

Carlos is also very attuned to the recent chief concerns of Orinda residents. He would address our growing crime problem by backing the City's acquisition of license plate cameras at all entry points, similar to those that Lafayette now has in place. He would address the traffic congestion problem in Orinda's downtown, which he knows is related to its parking problems. Too many non-Orindans use our streets for BART parking, as Orinda is the last Contra Costa BART stop before the Caldecott Tunnel back-up of traffic.

Carlos sees that responsive City Council work requires greater communication between Orinda residents and their Council members. To address this, Carlos has pledged to hold weekly "open-door" sessions with Orindans in which they may air their views to him on any topic of public interest. That's quite a commitment, and speaks volumes about Carlos' desire to excel at the job. I'm proud to be Carlos' friend and neighbor, and I invite any of your readers or staff to follow up with me to ask specific questions or get further background. I'd be pleased to respond.

Best regards,
Ted Parker
Orinda

Editor:

I strongly endorse Bob Thompson for Orinda City Council.

I have served with Bob for over six years on the city Finance Advisory Committee (FAC). He is thorough, deeply understands financial issues, emphasizes fiscal soundness, and is very collaborative and respectful of all viewpoints. Bob has extensive community service experience. I know that Bob will bring this wisdom and approach to the two key issues facing Orinda: (1) maintaining the city's strong fiscal position in light of rising police expense and employee health care costs and (2) fostering a community consensus on how to improve our sad and tired downtown. Orinda home values have begun to lag comparable properties in Lafayette, as young families prefer the vitality and options next door.

Bob Thompson understands these two issues and the need for balanced and collaborative approaches to both. Please join me in voting for Bob Thompson for Orinda City Council!

Carol Penskar
Orinda

Editor:

I am writing to encourage the voters of Orinda to elect Robert Thompson to the City Council.

I have known Bob for over a decade through his leadership in various community organizations, from the Scouts, to his church, to service on the Orinda Finance Advisory Committee, and have always been impressed with his strong financial skills, careful planning, balanced judgment, thoughtfulness, courtesy and civility.

Bob has over 37 years of experience working in finance as an investment advisor and has a strong set of analytical and financial skills that will be a great addition to the Orinda City Council. In his professional life, evaluating and avoiding financial risk is a major part of what he does. His service on the Finance Advisory Committee shows his dedication to sound municipal finance in Orinda.

Bob cares deeply about Orinda, and maintaining the qualities that have made this community a very special place. He will work to preserve those qualities -- but he is also open to careful planning for the kind of changes in the city (especially the downtown area) that will improve what we already enjoy and not detract from it.

Bob is committed to doing what is necessary to keep our crime rates low and our municipal finances in balance. He will work to continue to improve our infrastructure, especially our roads and storm sewers. He is also dedicated to giving all members of the community an opportunity for meaningful input into decision making.

Please join me supporting Robert Thompson for the Orinda City Council.

Brad Barber
Orinda

Editor:

He really listens!

That's a key reason why I'm supporting Carlos Baltodano for Orinda City Council. I first witnessed Carlos' listening skills 10 years ago when he was Contra Costa County's Director of Building Inspection and I was the Lamorinda community liaison for the late County Supervisor Gayle Uilkema. During interactions with county residents, Carlos was consistently polite and attentive to their concerns and objections. He never lost his cool and did his best to resolve disputes in a manner that was never dictatorial or heavy-handed. The supervisor appreciated his commitment to providing true public service.

After his retirement from the county, Carlos continued that commitment as a member for six years of Orinda's Planning Commission, which he completed last year as chair of the commission. Again, Carlos listened attentively to the concerns of applicants and appellants and based his decisions and votes on facts and what he believed was fair and in the best interest of the public and the community.

Carlos continues to utilize his skills and experience as a building safety consultant. Currently, the firm with which he's associated is contracted with the City of American Canyon. Following last month's earthquake centered close to that community, Carlos is helping with the process of identifying damage and rebuilding homes and other buildings.

Combine Carlos Baltodano's extensive experience in service to city and county governments with his ability and desire to listen to people and help them and you have the candidate uniquely qualified to serve the residents of Orinda as a member of our City Council. Please visit his web site, carlosfororindacouncil.com, learn about his priorities and plans, and join me in supporting him now and voting for Carlos Baltodano on November 4.

Mark Roberts
Orinda

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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