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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

"Throw the Bums Out!"

The cry of some letters to the editor regarding the upcoming Orinda City Council election. These opposition letters reject four candidates for City Council as unworthy. The letters support two inexperienced, nonetheless passionate, candidates. Letters supporting these opposition candidates are fervid. Choleric. Exaggerated.

Misbegotten, Misdirected.

To the contrary, the Council has been careful, deliberative, "tuned-in," seeing the "big picture."

1. Road repair: The Council commissioned an independent poll and saw 2/3 support for a \$20 Million bond issue. Measure J, passed (June 2014; 75% yes vote) reflected such community views. A textbook example of the Council staying in touch. (One of the two opposition candidates for City Council signed the ballot argument urging rejection of Measure J.) Now the opposition complains that Measure J's victory didn't represent Orindans' views. "Our way or the highway!"

2. Housing: The Council followed California law (protecting losses in road funding) by zoning a small, land-locked parcel at Santa Maria Church for higher density. This zoning may never lead to construction of moderately priced housing. The Council adopted a deft, locally based approach. Not enough for the opposition.

3. The Council applied the City's General Plan and zoning ordinances squarely, evenly to deny placement of a nursery school in the downtown retail area. (The Planning Department advised the nursery school that success was a "long shot.") Opposition letters? The Council is an enemy of "family values."

4. The City has a slowly deteriorating downtown. Opponents have no plan, nor interest, to attract downtown investment. Instead they cry of an unholy alliance of the Council with "collaborating, crony developers."

As forty-year residents of Orinda, we believe that four candidates for City Council would most appropriately occupy a City Council seat: Two community members (Robert Thompson [Chair, Finance Advisory Council] and Carlos Baltodano (former Chair, Planning Commission] and two current council persons (Amy Worth and Dean Orr).

Though three council seats are open this election, all four are worthy of our respect and support. They represent caution, care, compromise, listening to the community, respect for law, the big picture.

Respectfully submitted,

David W. and Sandra S. Anderson

Orinda

Editor:

A pernicious assertion that I've heard repeatedly from Orinda's civic leaders and at least one candidate for City Council is that older Orindans need and want to move from our homes in the hills, presumably into apartments concentrated in downtown Orinda.

Nothing could be further from the truth. I'm one of those aging Orindans. I've lived here for 36 years and spoken to a great many Orindans during that time. None—not one—has ever evinced a desire to do that. In fact we moved here specifically to avoid living cheek by jowl with our neighbors. We spent many years paying for our homes, paying taxes, supporting government services and schools, and working at jobs to allow us to remain in our semi-rural homes in our older years, finally able to enjoy the fruits of our labors.

Please don't use an "aging" population to justify construction of densely packed small houses and apartments in downtown Orinda. The putative "demand" for these units by older residents is a

complete fabrication.

Bill Brown

Orinda

Editor:

In our era of sound bite news, it's much easier to be opinionated than informed, and it's all too easy to cast disagreement as a lack of listening. In a democracy, we need to do better.

Having had the distinct privilege of serving on the Orinda school board for 12 years, I have come to understand the qualities needed for successful governance. Community trust is, perhaps, the single greatest asset any elected official can hope to earn. I can say without hesitation that each of the 12 individuals I served with over the years always acted in a manner that earned that trust.

I also understand the frustration of having to make solid decisions when there are no perfect solutions; of adhering to the very laws intended to ensure open communication or protect students' and employees' rights to privacy that, at times, appear to stifle open dialogue; and the necessity of balancing competing demands for limited resources. The issues may change, but the people we elect next month will deal with these difficult challenges as they work on our collective behalf.

School board incumbent Julie Rossiter, and city council incumbents Dean Orr and Amy Worth have proven their mettle. They are honest, fair-minded, intelligent, problem solvers who deserve to be re-elected. Similarly, school board candidates Hillary Weiner and Jason Kaune, and city council candidate Robert Thompson have been vetted through their countless hours of volunteer work on behalf of our schools and community. Each of these candidates are motivated by giving back to the community and moving us forward to keep our schools strong and Orinda the place we want to call home. They have earned my trust and my vote.

Pat Rudebusch

Orinda

Editor:

Julie Rossiter is running for re-election to the Orinda School Board. She is the candidate who has my vote. I encourage each and every voter in Orinda to vote to re-elect Julie Rossiter to the school board.

Julie has been a dedicated member of the school board for the last four years. As a returning trustee, the experience Julie Rossiter brings to the Board will be invaluable.

Julie is dynamic, committed and honest. She truly values excellence in education and is passionate about public school education in Orinda. She uses her background as a former attorney to get things done. She is the mother of three school-aged children who have been attending Orinda schools for the last 10 years. She is incredibly knowledgeable about our school district.

Experience, unwavering commitment and the vision of a team that will work hand-in-hand with parents, teachers, administrators, students and the community are crucial. With Julie's strong, experienced leadership and perseverance, excellence will continue to be the standard for our district.

Endorsed by current and former school board trustees, all five city council members, as well as numerous education leaders, Julie Rossiter is the leading candidate.

I wholeheartedly support Julie Rossiter in her re-election to the Orinda School Board and ask you to vote for her as well.

Sincerely yours,

Kimberly Thomas

Orinda

Editor:

After four years on the OUSD Board of Trustees and as current President, I have decided to not seek re-election. In large part, this came about by my knowing we have two great, new candidates who have stepped up to serve on this important board.

Jason Kaune, an Orinda native and now Sleepy Hollow parent, has the talent and the independence to be a valuable member of the OUSD board. He is fiscally minded and brings a tremendous amount of collaborative energy. Most recently, he has been helping Orinda tackle the tough problem of

improving our roads.

Hillary Weiner has a passion and enthusiasm for Orinda schools and education. As an OUSD board member, she will bring valuable experience coordinating efforts as a parent club president between students, parents, school staff, EFO and the broader community.

Despite difficult constraints and decreasing funding from the state of California, Orinda has remained outstanding in student education. This excellence draws families to the area and maintains home values. Julie Rossiter has served with me on OUSD's board since 2010 and has been everything I had hoped for in a team member. Under this board's direction, we have increased communication and transparency, hired many new excellent teachers, principals and staff, and provided superior education all without raising taxes.

I encourage you to join me in voting for Jason Kaune, Hillary Weiner and Julie Rossiter as the best candidates to lead our Orinda schools into the future.

Christopher Severson

Orinda

Editor:

Orinda schools are important.

Have you ever heard a candidate for Orinda City Council say that good schools are not a priority? Neither have I. Do you think the following actions demonstrate genuine concern for our schools: voting against an application to re-build a long-standing Orinda Montessori pre-school in another part of the city, or voting to overturn a 5-2 Planning Commission approval of this application? How about encouraging high-density housing in Orinda without considering the consequences of the influx of new students on our classrooms; is this evidence of high regard for our schools? I don't think so, either. Eve Phillips, former Miramonte valedictorian, will actually take steps to preserve the academic excellence that formed the foundation for her academic achievements at MIT and Stanford and subsequent career accomplishments in the Financial and Technology sectors. Linda Delehunt has spent a career in Education and truly understands its value to our community. That's why I'm voting for only Eve Phillips and Linda Delehunt in the Orinda City Council election.

Bruce London

Orinda

Editor:

Please join me in supporting Dean Orr and Amy Worth for reelection to the Orinda City Council.

I have had the honor of serving on the Council with Amy and Dean, and I have a deep appreciation for their individual areas of expertise and knowledge.

Amy has accomplished so much for Orinda: from working collaboratively with the School District to build the Wagner Ranch gym for the community, to crafting a private-public partnership to build the Orinda Library and provide the highest number of open hours in the County. Serving as our representative on many regional agencies, Amy has brought us additional dollars for senior transportation, increased recycling choices, and completed the fourth bore of the Caldecott tunnel on time and under budget.

Because of Dean's ability to work through every detail with the builder, we now have world class playing fields at Wilder, as well as at the new Pine Grove Park field. Dean has demonstrated his fiscal prudence by balancing our budget, increasing our reserves, and ensuring that Orinda has no unfunded liabilities. And as the parent of 2 OUSD students, Dean and his wife Alissa have been active school volunteers and Dean has worked to deepen the strong relationship between the City and the School District.

And have I mentioned the roads?! Both Amy and Dean have been instrumental in creating the plan to repair Orinda's roads and drains, and, more importantly, actually implementing that plan. We are now beginning to see the result of their hard work, as road projects are underway throughout the City!

Amy and Dean are doers, not talkers. Because of them, we have accomplished a great deal during the last few years. But there is more to do; finding additional revenues to complete our road

repairs, working closely with the community to make sure we continue to have a very safe community, and working to provide more services and amenities in our downtown.

Please join me in sending Dean and Amy back to work on the Orinda City Council!

Victoria Smith

Orinda

Editor:

In remembrance of what happened two years ago in Moraga politics, I was amazed to read something today which could only be construed as negative campaigning on the behalf of Ken Chew supporters. It was a highly erroneous statement made against both of Ken Chew's opponents suggesting that they were "hand-picked by a group of highly motivated special interest groups to do their bidding." Furthermore, it was suggested that we should "bullet vote" only for Ken Chew, and leave both his challengers' names unmarked. Huh?

For those who don't recall, two years ago, Mendonca did not win-reelection because she failed to listen to her constituency on numerous matters. Neither did Ken Chew, by the way, but he was not up for re-election two years ago. On one particular matter (off-leash hours at RLP) their disregard for this town's wishes was so egregious that a Referendum was signed by over 1100 voting Moragans (in just seven days) which blocked their actions.

Now, whether or not you care about off-leash dogs is not really relevant. What is relevant, is that Chew, Mendonca and Harpham tried to force their own position on the people of Moraga, against what they knew (or should have known) was the opinion of the majority...and it exploded in their faces. This is an historical fact.

And now, we're expected to "bullet vote" for an individual who has a proven record of usurping the will of the people? I have a much better idea. There are two seats open on the Town Council ...and both need to be filled by the best individuals. I will not be "bullet voting", but I certainly will be leaving one of three candidate's name unmarked. Can you guess which one?

Douglas Home

Moraga

Editor:

Forty years ago Moraga residents voted to incorporate, largely because of conflicts with the County over local development plans. In the last few years, our Town officials have approved several large projects and have adopted the Moraga Town Center Plan covering the Moraga Ranch area. Two projects, one on the old bowling alley site on Moraga Road and one next to the fire station on Moraga Way, are now very visibly in the planning stages. In addition, there are literally hundreds of units on the drawing board that are expected to be submitted in coming months.

Of the three candidates running for the Town Council, two of them have consistently voted to limit the size and impact of these developments. As a Council member, Dave Trotter has worked tirelessly to protect open space and ridge lines each time a development has come before the Town Council. In her capacity as a Planning Commissioner, Teresa Onoda has been an advocate for responsible development as well. Most recently she was one of only two votes on the Commission against the approval of the conceptual plan for Via Moraga, the proposed bowling alley site development. The other candidate has shown by his votes and his comments that he is not committed to maintaining our community as we want it to be.

If you are as alarmed as I am about the many development changes occurring here in town, please join me in voting for Dave Trotter and Teresa Onoda for Moraga Town Council. Thank you.

Claire Roth

Moraga

Editor:

I had the opportunity to serve four years (2008-2012) on the Moraga Town Council with both of the incumbents who are currently running for reelection. This November, I will be voting only for Ken Chew. Why? Well, I like the fact that Ken respects his colleagues and appreciates Town staff, that he consults broadly and listens carefully to diverse opinions, and that he approaches issues with a

mature decision-making style that does not include bullying and/or intimidating others when he doesn't get his way. I also appreciate that Ken refuses to serve special interest voting blocs in order to get reelected, and, prior to making public policy decisions, he always thinks—first and foremost—about what is in the best interest of the Town of Moraga and all of its citizens. It is precisely this kind of fair and principled leadership that the Town of Moraga will require in order to thrive in the future. Please join me in reelecting Ken Chew to the Moraga Town Council.

Karen Mendonca
Moraga

Editor:

My entire family is going to vote only for Ken Chew in the upcoming election. We have come to this decision because Ken is always well-prepared, always shows up at town events, and always does his very best for the Town of Moraga. During his past eight years in office, Ken has proven himself to be hard working, well informed, and highly knowledgeable about Moraga's ordinances and General Plan.

Ken is a person who does not try to influence others by his physical presence, but rather listens carefully to others prior to making his decisions on behalf of the town. He has remained a humble person who listens to all citizens who approach him--regardless of their perceived status in the community. To Ken, one opinion is every bit as important as another.

Moraga needs someone of Ken's character, proven leadership ability, and experience in local governance in order to ensure and maintain the character of our town. I encourage all Moraga citizens to vote only for Ken Chew in the upcoming election.

Donna Ward
Moraga

Editor:

The Town of Moraga needs Dave Trotter on the Town Council. In our dealing with Dave over the years we've always found him to be an individual who is capable of looking for solutions to problems that often polarize the Town. He exhibits the essential traits necessary for a Town official. Dave takes the time to be knowledgeable about the issues and respectful of differing points of views. Too often issues become emotional and it's important to have members of the Town Council who can rise above fray and create common sense solutions. This is why we will be casting our vote for Dave Trotter for Town Council.

Dante and Christina DaRodda
Moraga

Editor:

I'm writing to ask Moraga voters who want to protect open space and prevent too much development to note incumbent Ken Chew's changing philosophy on this issue.

In the past couple of years, Mr. Chew, who is seeking a third term on the Town Council, has gradually distanced himself from the open space protection that was his main campaign issue in past elections. We saw this stark shift when Dave Trotter began his 2013 term as Mayor and proposed—at a public goal-setting workshop held that January—that the Council review and update its open space/ridgeline development rules. Trotter also proposed a short-term moratorium on new open space development until any new rules were adopted. Ken Chew surprised many in the audience that day by opposing both the review/update process and the development moratorium. During Chew's current election campaign, whenever he has been publicly asked if the Town's ridgeline and open space regulations should be made stronger, he says he's looking forward to receiving a recommendation from the committee working on the issue. Mr. Chew should by now be very familiar with these regulations, having spent several years as a Planning Commissioner as well as eight years on the Council. Yet he has been unwilling to tell voters whether or not he believes these rules are adequate to protect open space. And last month Mr. Chew voted in favor of the Via Moraga development on Moraga Rd.—a project which will block views of Rheem Ridge from the Moraga Road scenic corridor—saying he did not want to delay the developer and was "not sure the

view was a concern." If protecting Moraga from excessive development is important to you, please take a careful look at Mr. Chew's record before you vote.

Joan Birke
Moraga

Editor:

I have been a Moraga resident for 29 years, living in an extremely high fire danger area. I am part of the aging population that considers emergency response to be the top priority before us. I have carefully followed the MOFD for years and think Kathleen (Kathy) Famulener is a breath of fresh air! She is on top of the financial situation but unwilling to bend on reducing firehouse staffing, quality of personnel or emergency times. Please vote for Kathy. Our lives and property may depend on it!

Joan Eidson
Moraga

Editor:

I want to express my strong support of Dave Trotter for re-election to the Moraga Town Council. I've known Dave for the past eight years in which he has served on the Council with distinction. During that time he has advocated for ridgeline and open space preservation, strong and prudent development controls, and improvements to the Town's parks and recreation facilities. He's been both a consensus builder and, where necessary, a strong negotiator in the interests of the Town. As a member of the Moraga Parks and Recreation Commission for 6 years, I found Dave's commitment to preserving and enhancing the Town's recreation facilities, including working for a community gym and multi-generational community center that would benefit families with young children and active seniors, to be second to none.

Personally, Dave has been a role model in encouraging people like me to actively participate in the Town's governing process through committees, commissions, and other volunteer activities that have made the Town stronger over time. His many accomplishments include strong support for the use of the Town's Measure WW funds to improve the Camino Pablo School sports fields; service on the Moraga Revenue Enhancement Committee which recommended funding strategies for repairing our neighborhood streets; campaigning for adoption of the Measure K one-cent sales tax to help pay for streets and critical infrastructure repairs; support for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and the adoption of the Moraga Center Specific Plan.

Dave Trotter has been a town asset for decades. I wholeheartedly support his re-election, and urge other Moraga voters to do the same.

Ravi Mallela
Moraga

Editor:

I'm writing to encourage Moraga voters to support Teresa Onoda for Town Council. Teresa is truly committed to the betterment of the Town of Moraga. Her vision does not focus on new development, but rather places emphasis on improving the existing infrastructure and upgrading the culture and aesthetic of the Town. She believes in preserving the semi-rural environment and character of Moraga, but recognizes the need to modernize so that citizens and visitors may enjoy high quality retail, restaurants and services. She understands that St. Mary's College is a real asset to the community and is enthusiastic about continuing to improve interaction between students, faculty and residents to yield a rich cultural and economic environment.

Teresa is dedicated to the high academic standards and expectations for Moraga schools. Her years of volunteerism and commitment to give back is extraordinary and I am confident she will be a wonderful advocate for continued support of education in our Town. She truly understands the importance of considering the impact on our schools when contemplating new development.

My family and I live in Moraga for its beautiful surroundings and family-oriented character. While we want this environment to be preserved, we also are desperate for new ideas and life to be infused into the Council. Teresa's energy and passion will bring a refreshing perspective and will offer a creative approach to improving this Town. We are happy to vote for Teresa Onoda and we hope

others will join us in affecting this positive change for the Town of Moraga.

Shanette Westphal
Moraga

Editor:

Residents and visitors that drive on Moraga Road between Corliss and Donald Drive, either to the Rheem Shopping Center, Campolindo, or on your way out of Town, should know that the Traffic Advisory Committee just this week decided to push forward the most drastic alternative being considered in the Livable Moraga Road project. The proposal will close two lanes of traffic, in favor of 2 Bicycle Lanes. The Town's own traffic study shows that this will degrade commute times, particularly as the already approved and proposed new homes are built here in Town. If you think the morning commute is crowded now, just wait until all those cars are squeezed into one lane. Emergency response times would also be impacted.

Similar proposals were rejected in 2002 and 2008. If you think this proposal should be scuttled once again, or at least modified to a more workable solution, which could accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, without so drastically impacting travel times in Town, let your Town Council members know! Speaking of Town Council, of the three candidates, Dave Trotter has been the most considerate in looking to find equitable compromise. Ken Chew, on the other hand, has continued his anti-driver stance well established in the Speed Bump "wars". Teresa Onoda has a long record supporting pedestrian safety (helping get the sidewalks to Rheem School put in years ago), and also seems to want to find a moderate solution.

As the signs on my lawn state, I'll be voting for Dave Trotter and Teresa Onoda for Town Council, as I think through the years, they will prove to be able to reach more workable solutions on a variety of issues, as opposed to Ken Chew, who has proven again and again that he is extreme, and often out of touch with the residents of our fine Town.

Sincerely,
Scott Bowhay
Moraga

Editor:

Another election year has crept up on me. As a busy mother of 2 elementary school kids and local business owner, it's hard to find time to know the candidates much less keep track of pressing local issues. But as I drive around Moraga for soccer practices and business meetings, I see the development demands of our community increase rapidly and the local strip malls still struggling...it makes me wonder who IS monitoring this? And are their interests similar to mine? Fortunately this year, Teresa Onoda, is running for Moraga Town Council.

For several years I've volunteered with others in Moraga, attempting to create a vision and action plan for our shopping and dining areas that better reflect the needs of our residents. This is no small task, but creating vital, up-to-date commercial districts that Moragans will support requires initiative, hard work, and a collaborative problem-solving mindset from our Town Council. We need fresh energy and ideas to work with the community, property owners and the current/ potential business owners to make this happen. If you've ever met Teresa Onoda, you know she is a positive-thinker with a lot of energy! She is smart, thoughtful and has a strong work ethic with a willingness to think innovatively.

I'm voting for Theresa Onoda because I think she can help us move forward to create the thriving commercial districts we all desire, continue to protect Moraga's natural beauty, and she'll consider carefully the pace at which we develop housing and increase our school populations. I would encourage all Moragans to vote and get to know the candidates this important election year.

Sincerely,
Hollie Lucas-Alcalay
Moraga

Editor:

I am writing to encourage Moraga voters to cast their vote for Dave Trotter for Moraga's Town

Council. In his eight years on the Council, including twice as Mayor, he has shown strength and dedication defending Moraga's ridgelines and open space, qualities that will be crucial in the next four years as many more development proposals come before the Council.

In 2011, he was the one councilmember to vote against the Rancho Laguna II ridgeline development. And, thanks to his leadership as Mayor last year, the Town is finally in the process of reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of Moraga's hillside and ridgeline regulations. Last month, Dave pushed for changes to the Via Moraga project on Moraga Road to ensure that the houses would not block public views of protected Rheem Ridge. However, since a majority of the Council was unwilling to require these changes, he voted "no" on the project which unfortunately passed on a 3-2 vote.

As an attorney, Dave Trotter has an extensive knowledge of land use and environmental laws, making him especially qualified to strike a balance that protects Moraga's precious open space areas, while insisting that any in-fill development be done carefully and responsibly. One can readily see from attending even a single Town Council meeting that Dave is an extremely sharp, articulate problem-solver who cares deeply about the future of Moraga.

Please join me in voting for Dave Trotter.

Tim Meltzer

Moraga

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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