

Published December 31st, 2014

Moraga's Mayor for 2015: Roger Wykle

By Sophie Braccini



Roger Wykle Photo Sophie Braccini

Leading the Moraga Town Council in 2015 is a relatively young mayor - being under 50 qualifies Roger Wykle as the youngest gavel-holder in quite a while. The poised civil engineer is firmly focused on town topics such as preserving open space and ensuring that the town develops a plan to address its unfunded maintenance projects.

Growing up in an Ohio family, where his father was in manufacturing, Wykle and his brother saw jobs moving overseas and decided they needed a way out that would not create a financial burden for their family. His older brother joined the Air Force, while Moraga's new mayor decided to enlist in the Coast Guard. High test results on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery sent him to the academy where he trained as a civil engineer before going for a master's degree at the University of Illinois. There he he met his spirited wife, Julie. Wykle later added an MBA from Old Dominion University. His military career took his family many places, including Hawaii, Turkey, New Orleans, Virginia, and Oakland, where the Coast Guard Civil Engineering unit is located. When it came time for

him to retire from the military, in 2009, a family meeting was convened. "The unanimous decision was to settle in California," he explains.

The Wykles chose Moraga primarily because of its good schools; and for Wykle, who had been raised in an area where the closest neighbor lives half a mile away, the open hills of the little town also had great appeal. "We found people to be very welcoming here." Between the Campo Cabana swim team, the Moraga Juniors, and the kids' schools, it didn't take long for the friendly family to find its social niche.

Professionally, Wykle continued his career as a civil engineer, first working for a consulting firm before starting his own company two and half years ago.

It was his wife who told him about an opening on the Moraga Planning Commission, and he could not resist. "Since I was 16 and a volunteer firefighter, I've always placed high value on community service," he says. Wykle served on the planning commission where he made his mark as someone who interprets the Moraga Open Space Ordinance, or MOSO, quite literally. "I think we live in a pretty special place here, to be able to look up and see the hillsides without any structures on them."

Wykle says he respects the right of property owners to develop their land. He believes that the whole population benefited from the town's incorporation 40 years ago, that property values have increased as a result, and that the people need to respect the rules and regulations the town adopted for itself.

"I opposed the Hetfield Place development because the property is a high-risk area and MOSO prohibits development in such areas." He says that when the town council interpreted the MOSO text several years after the passage of the ordinance, it concluded that if a piece of land could be re-engineered, and the high risk mitigated, then development could be approved. "You can scrape the mountain tops down, you can dig landslides, but you permanently hurt the landscape; and if the landslide becomes active again, the town's responsibility could be engaged," explains Wykle, adding

that he is not opposed to development per se - infill development makes sense to him, as long as it is done the right way and fits with the rest of the community.

Wykle was elected to the Moraga Town Council two years ago. He served as vice mayor in 2014, and in November the council named him mayor for 2015. He says he is looking forward to studying some of the projects located in the Moraga Center Specific Plan area, which are in the pipeline for the council's review. "I like the vision of the plan; I like a walkable community there," he says, "but some details need to be adjusted."

Like most council members before him, Wykle values Moraga's prudent fiscal management. He is quick to add that although he knows the operational budget has been balanced for years, the town needs to address its deferred maintenance needs. "My experience says that we should do a facilities assessment, develop projects, determine the cost of those projects, and prioritize those projects." He adds that it will cost a little bit of money to do the assessment, but once you have the program, you can make intelligent funding decisions. "You can't say that you have a balanced budget when you have unfunded liability."

Wykle would like to see a survey conducted to determine what residents think their town should do with the Palos Colorados development fees. "Do we maintain the town's facilities, do we build new facilities, do we purchase open space? I'd like to have a feel for what people want."

"The public should be respected and listened to, and that will happen under my watch," the new mayor concludes.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA