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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Thanks to the amazing support we received from Moraga voters throughout our Town, in just three short weeks, our "Keep Moraga Semi-Rural" volunteer signature gatherers were able to secure over 1,500 signatures (15% of Moraga's voters) on our Referendum Petitions. That total far exceeded the 1,003 signatures that were required.

We were overwhelmed by the outpouring of response we received. Our basic "Keep Moraga Semi-Rural" message resonated with many long-time residents as well as young families. We very clearly heard Moragans express their keen opposition to the Town Council's approval of the massive project on the Moraga Way next to the Firehouse.

The next step in the process is for the County Elections Department to verify that the number of valid signatures on the petitions exceeds the minimum required. We don't yet know how long that might take.

Once that validation process is complete, then the Moraga Town Council will have to consider what path to take in response to the very substantial number of Moragans who have already gone on record telling the Town Council they disagree with the majority of Council members who voted for the rezoning.

Alternatively, it can either call for a Special Election, which would be expensive or it can put the issue on the ballot at the next General Election, which is a much less expensive process.

We encourage you to closely follow the Town Council's actions. Let them know your views on what course they should next take - for smart and thoughtful growth to preserve the Semi-Rural Moraga that we all love.

The Friends of Semi-Rural Moraga

Editor:

I read the Lamorinda Weekly May 20 front page story, "Planting the Seeds of Hope," about the wonderful teachers and fifth graders of Burton Valley Elementary School who are promoting the survival of the Monarch butterflies. When asked by writer Lavin what is causing the precipitous demise of the Monarch butterfly, Ms. Ketcham answered, "RoundUp."

I agree. Lamorinda residents, including those of us from Parents for a Safer Environment, attended the "Marches against Monsanto" in Oakland on May 23rd. We joined residents of 428 cities in 38 countries all over the world, including Bay Area cities, to express outrage over Monsanto's unethical means of promoting GMO and pesticide products like Roundup and profiting at the expense of the community's and environment's health.

Public agencies, professional and home gardeners alike have become so dependent on Roundup, a seemingly simple answer to weed control. Data from the US EPA's Pesticides Industry Sales and Usage 2006 and 2007 Market Estimates Report shows that the active ingredient, glyphosate, is being applied at the rate of over 10 million pounds a year in the United States for non-agricultural purposes alone.

Recently in March of 2015, the World Health Organization, International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO IARC) re-classified glyphosate as a "probable carcinogen." In addition to glyphosate linked with cancer, peer-reviewed and published studies from 2003 to 2010 also link glyphosate to increased rate of breast cancer growth at the levels found in the bloodstream of Roundup applicators and other concerning studies such as birth defects and hormone disruption in animals. But our government has decided that the economic benefits outweigh the damage caused by Roundup to date and allows Roundup and thousands of other pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, rodenticides, fungicides, etc..) that have even more evidence of damage to people, wildlife and the environment.

Here are a few simple ways to fight back: Join Parents for a Safer Environment, a local East Bay grass roots organization that's been working since 2003 educating us and urging our schools, cities, and county to find safer alternatives to Round Up and other pesticides. Or Join your neighbors through NextDoor and organize to be heard by your local schools, cities and county officials. We must act now for our sake, the sake of our children and our planet's future.

Christine Steck
Moraga

Editor:

With much fanfare, the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority and the "rebranded" Republic Services announced that the region would be receiving new garbage cans. Some questioned the need for this change as clearly the change wasn't necessary for any practical need such as to accommodate new automated trucks. Moreover, there was the legitimate concern of creating new waste with the disposal of the old cans.

Nonetheless, all the concerns were dealt with and the new cans started arriving in Orinda in June. However, the exchange did not go as advertised. For starters, the new cans were supposed to be delivered the day before the normal garbage pickup day. Instead, in some areas of Orinda, new cans have arrived on the same day as garbage pickup. The old cans were supposed to be removed after the garbage pickup, but this did not always happen either. As a result, homeowners have been forced to leave unsightly cans in front of their property for periods exceeding two weeks and counting.

More disturbing has been the quality of the new cans. After the first week of normal use, I photographed an organics can, which had lost a wheel. This morning, I spotted a 2-week-old landfill can with its lid completely missing:

Clearly this has been an ambitious and costly exchange without any obvious necessity. The quality of the previous cans was hardly exemplary. If this is an indication of the quality of the new cans, how many of these new cans will require replacement and who will pay for it?

Edouard Lagache
Orinda

Editor:

It is sad but no surprise that Stephanie Hom is leaving the Town of Moraga's staff for a bigger job in Oakland. During her three years at Administrative Service Director she improved our financial controls and reporting to a level far above what we experienced when I was on the Town Council. She is a star, and larger cities can pay more for stars. Most Moraga residents never meet the members of the town staff as they come and go, but we should understand that the quality of our staff is very important. Thanks to former Town Manager Phil Vince for initiating the improvement several years ago and to current Town Manager Jill Keimach for continuing it. All the best to you, Stephanie.

Dale Walwark
Moraga

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