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Chief of Police Becomes Interim Town Manager

By Sophie Braccini



Moraga Chief of Police Robert Priebe with outgoing Town Manager Jill Keimach Photo Clinton Calkins

encouraged him to accept.

Priebe realized this was the type of challenge he was interested in at this point in his career. "There are a lot of skills that can be transferred," he said, "such as team management, or dealing with people and community issues." He compares his approach to that of a coach watching all his incredible players doing what they do well, "and making sure we are all moving in the same direction to achieve the vision of the council," adds Priebe.

The interim manager knows he will need to learn a lot of technical elements, but on the people side, his many years managing the Moraga police department has been good training. "I know what I don't know, and I also know who knows. So I rely on those people with trust and confidence." Priebe says he will continue to keep his door open and encourages residents to contact him if they want to talk.

Priebe says he will make what the council decides happen, whether it is regarding the Rheem Theatre, the Hacienda de las Flores, hillside and ridgeline regulations, infrastructure maintenance, or the purchase of video cameras for the town. When the camera discussion started about a year ago, then Chief Priebe was not completely sold on the idea.

"I have always seen them as a tool to solve crimes but until now have not felt the interest to invest funds for them," he said. "I am thrilled the town wants to give MPD more tools and I am anxious to have it completely vetted in public discussion. MPD has always provided police services at the lowest cost per capita on the County and is consistently one of the safest communities in the state, so selling the idea of more officers or new technology has always been difficult. The council and public support for cameras is appreciated and will be brought forward with my full support."

Keimach warned Priebe that the hardest part will be letting go of his former department. When she "passed the baton" to him, instead of a police baton, she gave him a thin wooden conductor's rod. But the police department is still close to Priebe's heart. He says that he still has his radio and gun

Chief of Police Bob Priebe turned in his uniform Feb. 1 to fill the position of Moraga town manager until a replacement for Jill Keimach can be found. Priebe, who has served on the police force for the past 38 years, welcomes the new challenge. Jon King will serve as acting police chief during this interim period, and Priebe will return as chief of police when a new manager is hired. But Priebe says if enjoys the new responsibilities, he might throw his hat in the ring for the permanent position.

Priebe was surprised when Keimach approached him before she left and suggested he become her interim replacement. "At first I said 'no way' because I did not know enough about planning," he says. But he realized that he could count on planning director Ellen Clark to hold her own and give him time to ramp up. Other department heads such as Edric Kwan (Public Works) and Jay Ingram (Parks and Recreation) approached him and

accessible and a police jacket in the back of his car. "In case of a police emergency and if reinforcement is needed, I am available."

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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