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Lamorinda BART Results: One Incumbent Breezes, One Pummeled

By Nick Marnell



Rebecca Saltzman

Former Moraga Mayor Ken Chew delivered a strong performance in Contra Costa County in the race for Bay Area Rapid Transit District 3 director, but he was ultimately done in by incumbent Rebecca Saltzman's strength

in Alameda County.

"I'm stunned. I am surprised at how well Rebecca did. I hoped that Lamorinda could counter her strength in Berkeley but it did not," said Chew, who finished second out of four District 3 candidates.

"We did run a close race in Contra Costa County," said Saltzman, whom Chew defeated there by 100 votes out of 25,000 cast; however, the incumbent beat Chew by more than 25,000 votes of the 70,000 in Alameda County. Saltzman said that the agency must get to work on the division in Contra Costa County. "Maybe some of the funds from Measure RR that we use there will help repair the damage," she said.

Chew was the only candi-

date of the four who did not support Measure RR, the \$3.5 billion BART funding request that voters overwhelmingly approved, but he did not think it hurt him in his race. "It was more publicized in Contra Costa County, not so much in the other counties," he said.

"We'll regroup, then we'll have to analyze the data," Chew said.

"I'm glad I did it," said Varun Paul, the Berkeley activist who ran a grassroots campaign and pulled in nearly 10,000 votes. "I have one regret, though. I would have raised money from traditional sources, which would have helped me get my message out via more traditional means." He acknowledged that he could have done a better job explaining the deficiencies in the

BART record, especially to new residents.

Paul said he was disillusioned that organizations would endorse a candidate without even contacting or inviting him. "I don't know what I'll do next," he said. "I was turned off by the process, but I am still excited about government and political activity."

Fourth-place finisher Worth Freeman declined to comment on the BART race. "Unfortunately considering the presidential election circumstances I sunk myself into work and solitude," he said.

District 1 Race

In the race for director of BART District 1, which includes the Lafayette BART station, financial analyst Debora Allen defeated

three-term incumbent Gail Murray with more than 64 percent of the vote.

"It was a combination of things," Allen said. "We ran a good campaign, and we spent our money well. The public wants more financial oversight. But the biggest factor was the public sentiment that BART needs to change and to embark on a new path."

"I understand that people have been frustrated by the crowding and equipment problems on BART," Murray said. "Solutions take time and money, and I know that because of my work on behalf of my constituents, I leave BART with a better future to serve the Bay Area."

Moraga

Disc Golf Course



Corey Kohler aims at a distant basket.

Photo Sophie Braccini

A bit behind the skate park, a father is explaining to his two young boys how to play disc golf. From the pad of hole number 1 he points to the distant four-foot tall metal basket one can glimpse past oak trees. Hole 1 is the gateway to a whole new exploration of the park that takes players along a 9-hole well-designed course, up hills and behind trees and bushes, in areas of the park that are seldom used.

On that Saturday, the course was very busy with a mix of Lamorinda families with kids, and some more serious players coming to the Moraga disc golf course for its challenging configuration and beauty.

Disc golf is a fun sport with a very low entry cost, about \$20 for a mid-range starter disc (don't say Frisbee; that's a larger disc for playing at the beach). There are not that many courses around, so Moraga's, a course that was donated to the town by the Women Society in 1982, attracts players from all over the East Bay. Parks and recreation authorities in town say they want to preserve the activity at the Commons, but Moraga does not own much public land and competing uses of the park are putting pressure on the disc golf course. At a recent parks and recreation commission meeting, the commissioners supported director Jay Ingram proposal to move some of the pads and

holes, in opposition of the Moraga disc golf club, represented by Andrew Summers and Corey Kohler.

Kohler says that he comes to the Commons once or twice a week. He lives in Martinez and knows well the six courses that are available in the East Bay. He says that the Moraga club has between 75 and 100 active members. In the little cart he wheels around the course, there are about 20 different discs. Some are used to go fast and far, some turn more easily, some are heavier and steadier and are made for short distances once you get close to the basket. He shows the different ways of throwing the discs, with a wide shoulder movement, or backhanded and more from the elbow. As he plays with a friend who came with him, they stop to let other parties finish the holes.

Up and down, over dirt and along small paths, a first-time player can be surprised to discover the less manicured Commons and be suddenly taken aback by the beauty of the view reaching the top of a hill. Then players reach the pad for basket number 6. This is the longest hole of the course, but it is a par 3 like all the other ones. Kohler explains that in California all the holes are par 3, whatever their length. Basket 6 is set deep inside the part of the park that is called the Back 40, a flattish area to the left of

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the bridge that connects the park to the Lafayette Moraga trail.

It's back there that some trouble has been brewing for some time. There are talks of benches installed by the disc golfers that were vandalized by unknown entities; accusation from the town that golfers broke some trees; instances when town employees who were planting new trees were verbally abused by golfers and cameras installed by the town to make sure that no damage would ensue.

Hole 7 starts also in the Back 40 and Ingram says that even though he supports a 9-hole course in Moraga, future use of that space could lead to the redesign of the course. The threat led the golf club to circulate a petition asking to leave the course as is. Some parks and recreation commissioners did not like the fact that many of the people who signed it were not from Moraga. Dave Schnurr stated that the park was a Moraga property, while John Tomei added that no one group gets whatever they want, and that if the town has to adjust the course for the benefit for everyone, it has to be considered.

But oblivious to these tensions, families continue to use the course. Jeff Collins from Moraga and his two children and Miriam Chiapetta from Lafayette with her own two had joined forces on that Saturday afternoon to explore the course. The four children, age 7 to 11, were leading the way, with more or less success, but a lot of laughter while getting a good exercise. Behind them Chiapetta was trying her hand for the first time and found it interesting and challenging, while Collins, more experienced, just enjoyed the stimulating course and a pleasant family activity and workout.

"This is one of the great aspects of this sports," says Kohler, "it is for the whole family."

The Moraga disc golf club meets every Tuesday at the Commons and is happy to initiate beginners.

Orinda

PG&E Substation

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The Lost Valley PG&E substation.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

PG&E managed to allay the fears of the neighbors, stating that the trees at the front of the substation were not slated for removal, and that the trees that will be removed will, according to PG&E, barely be noticed, being at the back of the facility and under the high voltage towers.

Matthew McLane, PG&E Vegetation Program Manager, walked the border of the meadow with Jack Paulus, secretary of the Lost Valley Association. PG&E expressed how important the meadow was to their operations, but agreed that, by moving the existing fence a bit deeper into the meadow, screening vegetation could be planted along the outside of the fence in certain areas. McLane also pointed out existing vegetation that will be encouraged to grow and will, in time, provide more screening, but at the same time PG&E drew the line about where vegetation could not

be planted closer to the electrical lines. PG&E was also represented by Tom Guarino, public affairs representative, Matthew Bateman, substation maintenance supervisor, Jennifer Estridge, electric customer outreach specialist and Lindsey Welchoff, land consultant, natural resource management.

Other topics discussed included malfunctioning strobe lights, which PG&E pledged to shut off, and continuing sound studies for later in the year. Residents would like the signs on the gates to the substation to be less visible, but PG&E demurred, stating that safety mandates that that signs be visible at eye level to arriving employees. In the end, PG&E apologized for the delays in dealing with the issues around the substation, and promised action by next spring. The company listened to the thoughts of the neighbors and agreed to implement them wherever possible.