



## MORAGA

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### Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us  
Phone: (925) 888-7022

### Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org  
Moraga Citizens' Network:  
www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



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## Moraga Citizens Network holds online Candidates Night

By Vera Kochan

Adhering to county social distancing mandates, the Moraga Citizens Network held its Sept. 30 town council Candidates Night via Zoom. The public was encouraged to submit questions days beforehand regarding important issues concerning the town of Moraga.

Shari Simon, current president of MCN, opened the online event with a brief overview of the agenda. Each candidate was allowed to give a two-minute introduction. That was followed by eight out of 40 questions submitted by the public, to which each candidate had two minutes to respond. Once the question portion of the evening was over each candidate was given one minute for closing comments. According to MCN, there were seven basic themes revolving through the questions: development; fiscal management; fire safety; council culture; climate; inclusion and open space.

Moderator Chris Laszcz-Davis, a facilitator for the Lamorinda Presents Group, kept the time allotment clock on point. The candidates themselves kept well within

their timeframe margins and delivered a civil performance.

The following candidate comments are a compilation of responses to all eight questions:

Candidate Kendall Langan views Moraga's homes, schools, parks and bike trails as its chief economic assets and hopes that the Moraga Center Specific Plan will attract more people to help the town grow. While it's important to maintain Moraga's open spaces, open growth will increase revenues and make a tax hike unnecessary. Planned growth will keep the ridgelines intact.

Langan feels that shoppers are leaving town because there's nothing to shop for and believes it's important to welcome vital businesses. He would like to change the image of the town council by introducing more town halls where residents can have increased opportunities to address their concerns publicly. He stressed the need for residents to mitigate property vegetation and keep evacuation routes clear. He would rather see Moraga's EV charging stations located in more accessible locations rather than the town offices and Moraga Commons Park.

With regards to inclusion, Langan believes in sensitivity toward diversity.

Candidate David Stromberg feels that the community is the town's biggest asset – people are involved in Moraga, and that includes business leaders, the Chamber of Commerce, along with various organizations donating time and money. He said it's important to look for new ways to generate revenue such as becoming a charter city or have a real estate transfer tax on sellers that leave Moraga (something that he's not committed to, but has explored). He has studied how a city such as New York handles diversity in business and feels it will benefit Moraga to follow the same example.

Stromberg likes the idea that the MCSP will focus on a multi-family/mixed-use/senior housing scenario in the center of town. Residents of that area will not have to use cars to shop or dine, and it moves development away from the open spaces, which in his view are fire zones. Stromberg thinks the town council should have a degree of tolerance by listening to the value of what a difference of opinion could bring to the table in order to work collaboratively.

Candidate Renata Sos feels Moraga's schools are its biggest economic asset in boosting property values. The town's growth is vital, and by targeting the growth to the town's center it allows for open space preservation. En-

couraging people to shop in Moraga brings much needed revenue. The town council needs to identify investment needs, prioritize spending and look for ways to be more efficient in order to avoid a need for new taxes.

Sos believes it's important to provide the Moraga Police Department and Moraga-Orinda Fire District with the resources to keep the town safe, and by the same token, residents must do all they can to keep themselves safe. She feels that the town council sets the tone for the town itself, and it's important to treat everyone with dignity that invites a diversity of views. The entire town must continue to practice tolerance and kindness and reduce the barriers to becoming a business in Moraga.

Sos pointed out that the current town council has made strides toward a green Moraga by installing EV stations, hydration systems, making HVAC improvements and giving residents an additional energy option with MCE.

Candidate Teresa Onoda feels that people move to Moraga because of the schools and eventually fall in love with the open spaces. Town council members should vote by the General Plan's guidelines and standards involving hillsides and ridgeline ordinances. The MCSP will give students and seniors an opportunity to live in a beautiful development without adding additional traffic. Moraga doesn't receive

a large cut of tax revenues and the storm drain maintenance being done is a patch-as-you-inspect process. There might have to be something on the ballot with a sunset clause to pay for the infrastructure needs.

With regards to future town councils, Onoda says that each person has a perspective and needs to be heard. Respect and integrity holds the council together. As for a green Moraga, she would like the town's scientists to come together and update the Climate Action Plan. Onoda believes in the town's police department and feels they take care of everyone on an equal level while keeping the peace.

Candidate Ursula Schilling also feels that Moraga's schools are the reason people move to town. It is important to maintain a business friendly environment, and by doing so it encourages more vital businesses to come to town thereby increasing revenue. While traffic is an important consideration she feels that the town and the developers must share more common ground. Schilling wants the town council to have shorter meetings. She feels that it's important for citizens to be part of the process to keep Moraga fire safe and to partake in the MPD and MOFD drills. She agrees with the town's CAP, and Schilling stresses the importance of tolerance within the community.

To watch the Candidates Night recorded Zoom event visit: [www.MCNMoraga.org](http://www.MCNMoraga.org)

## Human trafficking arrests in Moraga

By Vera Kochan

After receiving complaints for several months about suspected nefarious activity at a Miramonte Drive home in Moraga, investigators compiled enough information to obtain a search warrant and accompany a Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office SWAT team to the residence on Sept. 30.

Three suspects were ar-

rested without incident and booked at the Contra Costa County Jail in Martinez: Herbert Williams, 35, of Moraga (warrant - human trafficking, pimping and pandering); Alexa Landa, 30, of Moraga (warrant - human trafficking, pimping and pandering); and Justin Lewis, 31, of Oakley (identity theft and possession of controlled substance).

Firearms and other evidence were also seized during the warrant service. Develop-

ments have come to light that Williams and Landa may be involved in additional crimes both in Contra Costa and San Mateo counties.

As of Oct. 7, Moraga Police Detective Kevin Mooney stated, "There is not really anything else I can disclose right now." The investigation is ongoing at this time. Anyone with additional information is encouraged to contact Mooney at (925) 888-7056.

## Caregiver of aging Moraga couple charged with stealing over \$360K

By Vera Kochan

According to court records, Heidi Suzanne Miller of Alameda was hired as a caregiver for a Moraga couple in their 70s who are suffering from early onset dementia. Miller was charged on Sept. 29 with access device fraud in the theft of \$360,000. Prosecutors have uncovered more than \$500,000 of "unauthorized transactions" from the couple's bank accounts over a three-year period beginning in 2016, immediately following Miller's hiring by the victims' family.

The crime was initially reported to the Moraga Police Department after April 2019 when Miller's employment was terminated. Two officers were assigned to the extensive investigation. After consulting with the District Attorney's office, the decision was made to begin prosecution through the U.S. Attorney's office in Federal Court.

MPD turned over the investigation to the FBI and coordinated the filing of the case.

The suspect used the money to make the following purchases: a new king-size bed; a Peloton bicycle; automobiles (including a Porsche and BMW); paid college tuition for her daughter; \$15,000 for LuLuLemon clothing; liposuction and breast augmentation surgery; numerous high-end purses and jewelry; thousands of dollars worth of items for her pets; a Disneyland trip; and a Princess Cruise.

The complaint alleges that Miller often posed as one of the victims to extract funds from bank accounts. Additionally, she is alleged to have taken money from one of the victim's military veterans retirement account.

Miller was freed on her own recognizance Oct. 5. The access device charge carries a maximum of 15 years in federal prison and a \$250,000

fine.

"I think that it is difficult when relatives are getting older and need assistance," stated Moraga Police Chief Jon King. "Family members need to strike the correct balance between allowing them to be independent and trusting caregivers, while verifying expenses and ensuring their relatives are safe."

King cautioned, "Credit card and bank statements need to be diligently checked and balanced on a frequent basis by family members, not caregivers. In this case, the suspect did not waste any time and was making fraudulent purchases within a week of starting to work for the family. It is essential for family members to stay present with frequent visits and telephone calls."

MPD advises people to check out the internet or contact the county for tips about hiring caregivers.

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