

Dr. Julie Parks to succeed Bruce Burns as superintendent of Moraga School District



Dr. Julie Parks Photos provided



Bruce Burns

By Jenn Freedman

Julie Parks, Ed.D., will become superintendent of the Moraga School District beginning July 1, the Moraga School Board announced last week. Parks was most recently the principal of Orinda's Miramonte High School in the Acalanes Union High School District, a position she has held for the past seven years.

Parks has been an educator for over 18 years. Prior to her tenure at Miramonte, she

worked as an assistant principal, vice-principal, student services coordinator, and middle school teacher. In 2019, Parks was recognized by the Association of California School Administrators as the principal of the year.

Parks completed her doctorate (remotely) in Organizational Change Leadership at University of Southern California earlier this year. Her dissertation "Connectedness and Distance Learning: A Study of Student, Parent and Teacher Perceptions" was nominated as

a Dissertation of Distinction at USC.

"I am honored to continue to serve the Lamorinda community as superintendent of the Moraga School District. As a leader, I am focused on equity, building capacity, and connectedness, and I look forward to entering this post-pandemic year with energy and excitement," Parks shared.

Parks lives in Lafayette with her husband, Sean, and two sons, Liam (11) and Lucas (8). "They are my biggest supporters and have generously 'shared me' with my work for years!" Parks passionately added.

Superintendent Bruce Burns announced his impending resignation in mid-February. Burns has served in the District for 25 years, the last 11 in his current role. He began his career in the MSD in 1996, when he reopened the previously shuttered Los Perales Elementary School as principal. He subsequently served as the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School principal, before being

appointed to the role of superintendent in 2010.

During his tenure, Burns moved the District forward in several important areas including a renewed focus on curriculum, professional development for all educational staff, strengthening cultural competency, and overseeing \$33 million in school renovation, safety and modernization projects at four school sites.

Burns shared, "Reopening Los Perales School in 1997, serving as the JM principal, modernizing our schools, ensuring a sound financial position for the district following the Great Recession, working with outstanding educators and governing board members, and adopting and implementing new Common Core instructional texts in reading, writing, math, science and history-social studies are outcomes I am especially proud to have been a part of."

Burns has maintained his strong leadership and tremendous resilience throughout times of challenge, including

economic uncertainty, wildfire risk, power outages, large bond construction projects, and the COVID-19 pandemic. "His integrity, calm demeanor, high visibility throughout the community, and focus on what is best for students have been hallmarks of his career here in Moraga. Superintendent Bruce Burns has always been steady at the helm, making sure that everything kept moving forward, all while keeping our eyes on the ultimate goal of continuing to provide the highest quality education to each and every student in the Moraga School District. As a Governing Board, we would like to thank Superintendent Burns for his dedication, diligence, care, and educational expertise during his tenure," School Board President Janelle Chng said.

"While I will depart with a heart full of gratitude, I am looking forward to the next chapter, to learn and grow in new and different opportunities, ones I will explore after June," acknowledged Burns.

Letters to the editor

DEI - another acronym?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Heard of this one? News to me. Cropping up everywhere, including Lafayette's Equity and Inclusion Task Force. My granddaughter's corporate position is Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. She should be able to bring Papa up to speed on DEI. Diversity: People have different backgrounds: (gender, race, religion), and a variety of experience; Equity: People are treated fairly and justly; and Inclusion: Everyone has 'a seat at the table'.

Further discussion brought to light that a common thread weaves between the three factors i.e. Connection, describing an individual's need to be recognized, heard, and affirmed, as a contributing member of a community (business, civic, social or residential).

I listened, while thinking to myself, "Okay fine, this is business world stuff; has nothing to do with me." But an uncomfortable question hung around, "If DEI is about connection, I connect with people every day." Is there a message here? Upon re-

lection, I realized I only talk with people I'm comfortable with, and, I don't talk to strangers, because they're different, which engenders anxiety and fear.

What if I redefined stranger as: A friend I have yet to meet. And so, I started greeting strangers with simply "hello" or "How ya doing?"

Sometimes a conversation ensued, sometimes not; in either case, strangely enough, I felt good inside. And, it was apparent the other person was pleased to be acknowledged. Can just a bit of conversation make a stranger feel good?

Sometime later, sitting next to a stranger while waiting for a restaurant table, I asked the Black woman, "Been here before?" "Yes." "Live locally?" "No, Oakland." She asked, "Have you tried their Mimosa?" "No."

Later, sitting at my table, waiting for my guest, I was totally surprised to have a Mimosa set before me, with the food server acknowledging, "It's from the lady over there." Looking up, it was the woman from the

bench, waving her hand, while smiling. Not only was there connection, but it was definitive that I had, indeed, made a stranger feel comfortable.

These days, I look forward to greeting the next stranger, the friend I have yet to meet.

Connection builds community, and each of us has unlimited opportunity to participate.

Papa John Kiefer Lafayette

Baitx, Donner and Danziger do not serve and protect us

Here we are in fire season, with a heat wave, during the fourth driest year on record. Last summer we had a dark red sky at noon, with soot falling everywhere. We begged the MOFD board to continue the chipper program during the summer, but three board members Danziger, Donner and Baitx, were, and remain, unwilling to spend ANY funds out of their \$33 million budget to do so. The reason Orinda has so much fire prone fuel is that MOFD consistently underfunds fire

prevention.

We Orinda citizens were asked last November for our priorities, by a city council poll. We clearly said No. 1 is wildfire risk reduction. The city council then said an additional 1/2 cent sales tax is needed as an "essential services" tax, that would address fire, roads, storm drains and emergency preparedness. This tax measure passed in January. Since then the city has not yet obtained a chipper and truck. MOFD, which was to provide personnel to man the chipper and had to stop its own chipper service for a period in May and June. We have lost months of vegetation removal.

MOFD is now negotiating raises for our firemen with their union. Three of the MOFD board members are either current or previously union firemen. Their election to the board was sup-

ported and funded by the union. Upon the union president's suggestion, director Baitx even placed on the agenda the consolidation of MOFD with Con-Fire. This resulted in strong opposition by hundreds of citizens and both city councils. The board back-pedaled.

It has become apparent that the three MOFD board members do not represent the citizens' interests. A formal complaint indicating the potential conflict of interest has been submitted to the California Fair Political Practices Commission to determine if director Baitx and possibly Donner and Danziger must recuse themselves from the salary negotiations.

Baitx, Donner and Danziger must never again be elected to the MOFD board.

Charles Porges Orinda

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters must be factually accurate and be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. Email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Council approves Planning Department FY 2021-22 Work Plan

... continued from Page A2

Wolff said there will be some level of analysis of the jobs housing balance through the General Plan Advisory Committee, but the item was added as a priority non-mandated item to the Work Plan. The motion was approved unanimously, with Council Member Cam Burks absent.

Discussion at the council meeting later turned to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Regional Housing Needs Allocation and how Lafayette numbers remain the same at 2,114 additional units as part of Plan Bay Area 2050, which was created to distribute the regional housing need of 441,176 units established by the State Department of Hous-

ing and Community Development. The city has until July 9 to submit an appeal.

According to Srivatsa, grounds for appealing are very precise and difficult. Mayor Susan Candell and Council Member Gina Dawson drafted a letter June 8 to ABAG, asking to review the inputs and outputs for the model that gener-

ated the RHNA allocations. The letter stated, in part, "We are concerned the methodology results in a disproportionate increase in the number of units assigned to Lafayette, perhaps as the result of some mathematical error. The allocation to Lafayette jumped by 28% between the proposed methodology of December 2020 and the

draft methodology of early 2021, from 1,660 units to 2,114 units. We have analyzed our 2020 and 2021 allocations as a proportion of our existing population, which shows that the City's increase to 2,114 is disproportionate to the increases seen in other jurisdictions of the County."

Anduri suggested the ap-

peal include the fact that Lafayette has more areas in high severity fire zones, and how avoiding building in those areas would cause inconsistent development in other areas. Staff will meet with the city attorney to craft an argument to bring to council on June 28.

Historic landmark status for Orinda home

... continued from Page A7

The question arose whether the designation would entitle the applicants to a reduction of property tax under the Mills Act. It was pointed out that, although the act does apply in Orinda, it requires approval by the city council and the Orinda City Council has never approved such an application in the past. The matter will next be considered by the Orinda Planning Commission.

Planning Together!

The General Plan is the guiding document behind Lafayette's built environment, open space, and infrastructure. After 20 years, the General Plan is getting an update - **let's make it a plan for the people by the people!**

Join the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) - a group of community volunteers advising the Planning Commission and City Council on the important decisions that will shape the community over the next twenty years at the first in-person event for the General Plan.

The GPAC wants your input to draft a plan that represents the community's vision. Visit PlanLafayette.org to get up to speed on everything that has happened to date and see what's coming next. Now is the perfect time to learn and speak up.

In-Person Housing Workshop

Wednesday, June 30 4-8PM
Don Tatzin Community Hall
Lafayette Library and Learning Center

Drop in to the first in-person General Plan update event where you and your neighbors will learn about the Housing Element and get to say your piece.

Participate in activities to share your opinion on where new housing should be planned in the context of existing housing, wildfire risk, traffic congestion, school capacity, and more!

Use your smart phone camera to scan this QR code to learn more!





Planning & Building Department

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