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Town council reviews options to fill Stromberg's vacated seat

By Vera Kochan

Former council member David Stromberg submitted his letter of resignation on Aug. 26, citing that he is moving out of Moraga. He announced that his last day on the council would be Sept. 9. The remaining four council members are now tasked with finding someone to fill his vacancy. There are two options available to the process: 1) call a special election, or 2) fill the vacancy by appointment - with an option for a direct appointment or an application, interview, appoint process.

According to a staff report by Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg and Town Clerk Marty McInturf, "If the council fills the vacancy by appointment, the duration of the appointment is determined by when the vacancy occurs. As Stromberg's vacancy occurs in the first half of the term of office and at least 130 days prior to the next general election, the appointed person would hold office until the November 2022 general municipal election."

If a special election option is decided, it must be held on the next regularly established election date, not less than 114 days from the call of the special election. A stand-alone special mail-in ballot-only election would be held on May 3, 2022. There are currently 11,638 registered voters in Moraga. At a cost of approximately \$8 per voter, the special election would cost the town \$93,104.

Another option would be a traditional mail/polling station election that would be scheduled for June 7. This type of election would cost approximately \$14 per registered voter for a total cost of \$162,932 to the town. Neither scenarios fit into the Fiscal Year 2021-22 budget.

Filling the vacancy by appointment would be less exorbitant and only require staff resources and town attorney time. Wishing to choose the less costly option, the council members decided to use the public application, interview and appointment process to fill Stromberg's term until the next election in November 2022.

Anyone seeking appointment to the town council must meet certain legal requirements: 1) Be a resident of Moraga and a registered voter; 2) Must be at least 18 years of age; 3) A newly appointed council member will have to file a Statement of Economic Interest (Form 700); and 4) Cannot be a current council member. The candidate application period opened on Sept. 10, along with the publishing of a council vacancy notice in local newspapers, on the town's website, in the About Town newsletter and on social media. Applications are due Sept. 30, and applicant interviews are set for Oct. 12 and 13. All interviews will be done in an open public forum and are expected to take place during special meetings. The council member appointment is Oct. 13.

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