

Letters to the editor

Appoint a new council member

As residents of Moraga since 1980, we are very concerned about the refusal of the Town Council's two members McCluer and Woehleke to agree to appoint one of two qualified candidates to take the place of resigned council member Mr. Stromberg.

The Council had already agreed to appoint someone to fill Mr. Stromberg's seat until the November 2022 regular election, a year from now. This procedure has worked well in the past, avoiding the high and unnecessary cost of holding a special election in June. Town residents Kerry Hillis and Sona Makker have applied to be considered for the open council seat and are considered qualified candidates.

Regretfully, Council members McCluer and Woehleke refusals to govern responsibly by agreeing to appoint one of the two candidates as a council member means a special and unnecessary election must be held in June which would cost our town around \$100,000 – a needless waste of our town's limited resources!

We urge Town Council members McCluer and Woehleke to actively participate in a discussion at their next meeting on October 27 regarding candidates Hillis and Makker and vote on their choice to fill the vacant council seat so Moraga Town Council can get back to work on the highly important matters awaiting their attention. Cayo and Fred Marschner Moraga

Agenda item for Town Council

Last week the Moraga Town Council became deadlocked over the appointment of a candidate to fill the vacancy created recently by the resignation of Councilmember Stromberg. I was deeply troubled as I watched the inability of Mayor McCluer and Vice Mayor Woehleke to see the value, talents, and significant experience of both candidates before them. Due to the impasse in getting at least 3 votes for one of the candidates threatens the scheduling of a Special Election for next

May or June at the cost of around \$100,000 for a mere 5 month term. An appointment at this time would have a 12 month term.

Either candidate would bring the perspective and expertise of a relatively young, well-qualified, and energetic person to the Council. Bringing this person onto the Council now would have the benefit of a full 5-member Council as it processes the complex matters and makes major decisions in the coming year. In addition, an appointment at the next Council meeting on Oct. 27 would prevent the Town from wasting \$100,000 on a needless special election.

I urge the Mayor and Vice-Mayor to fulfill their basic responsibility to set interpersonal matters aside and govern responsibly for the people of Moraga. Victoria Courtney, Ed.D. Moraga

Appoint a Moraga Town Council member and save us all a lot of money

The Moraga Town's government isn't making a lot of sense. Rather than appoint one of the qualified candidates to the open vacancy on the Town Council, two of the council's members prefer to spend \$93k-163k of money the Town does not have on a special election.

Do us all a favor and do your job. Appoint one of the qualified candidates and save us all the money of a special election. David Lorié Moraga

Moraga Council seat

I strongly object to the lack of action at filling the open council seat. We need a full council and we need those currently on it to act in the best interests of the town.

We have many worthy projects for the Town to spend its limited resources on. Running a special election is low on that list and any Council member who forces such an action is surely not going to get my vote and probably many others.

Furthermore, having arbitrary criteria that do not depend on candidates actual qual-

ifications is bigotry. If that criteria is skin color is it racism,; if it has to do with age, it is ageism. That is not the kind of Town we should want to live in.

I urge the Council to fill this vacancy quickly with one of the vetted candidates. The town can then get on to priority issues and the voters can express their views at the next regularly scheduled election. Sincerely, Max Sherman Rheem Valley

Critical Race Theory

Local parents should be aware that Critical Race Theory (CRT) is being promoted at local high schools and courses are being taught. Miramonte has "English 4 Deconstructing Race" per the Course Catalog for 2021-2022; see "Diversity and Inclusion" at miramonteparents.com. For Campolindo information see "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion" under "About Campo" at the main Campo website. The Acalanes School District has a computerized "AUHSD Bias Incident Reporting System," where one can report offenders, anonymously if desired.

At dnicampo.com is the following: "This year, the Campo Parent DNI Group will push on issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging based on gender, race, and sexual orientation and their intersectionality in the classroom, on the sports field, on campus, and in the community."

CRT is a Marxist-derived philosophy in which the world's people divide into oppressors and oppressed. See Wikipedia, a review of "Critical Theory" from the Frankfurt Group, and "Critical Race Theory: An Introduction" by Delgado and Stefancic. You can gain an understanding of this worldview from Campo's definitions at dnicampo.com/resources, where you will find the following terms defined: cisgender, diversity, equity, gender identity, gender expression, white culture, marginalized group, BIPOC, diversity, implicit bias, power, privilege, race, whiteness, microaggression, structural racism, white privilege, and others. David Berti Moraga

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Preschool waitlists continue to grow as directors struggle to find and keep staff



Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

Soledad Lascon reads with children at St. John's Preschool in Orinda.

By Sharon K. Sobotta

After working in her family's restaurant in Martinez for as long as she can remember, Soledad Lascon pivoted to a job as a cook at St. John's preschool in Orinda when her youngest child was born just before the pandemic. The site director Maria Rios noticed a sparkle in Lascon's eye as she served the preschoolers meals and snacks. This prompted Rios to encourage Lascon to take child care units while cooking, and ultimately helped her forgo a teacher shortage.

"Once I got there and started cooking, I realized I

really loved working with kids. I followed Maria's advice and went to DVC," Lascon said. "Since I finished work by 12, I had plenty of time in a day to begin completing my units."

In August when St. John's Preschool lost a teacher to a new opportunity, Lascon moved out of the kitchen and into the classroom.

"I love it," Lascon said. "When my own child looks at my phone and sees preschool pictures, he's jealous."

Lascon's youngest child is among the dozens of children on the waitlist for the school, which is licensed to serve 48 children and is at full capacity. If not for Lascon's willingness to make a professional pivot, Rios might've found herself in the increasingly familiar struggle so many preschool directors are facing.

"Thank goodness Soledad was ready to jump into the classroom when another teacher gave notice," Rios said. "I feel super lucky to have dodged the bullet that so many other schools are experiencing (with staff turnover and staff retention)."

Rios has worked at the preschool for two decades and has been in the director role for a few years. Like all of the six staff members at the preschool, Rios commutes in from a few towns away every day.

"I love caring for children in this community and I would love to live in this community, because the school district is just phenomenal," Rios said. "But I can't afford it."

Rios says she counts her blessings to have a job she loves, working with a community of children she adores. Of course, she says she's also aware of class disparities. "Sometimes we think we've evolved from these issues, but people of color are (in many cases) having to struggle so much more," Rios said.

Rios' 4-year-old is a student at St. John's preschool. When the enrollment numbers allow for it, teachers have the option of enrolling their own children in the preschool. However, since the pandemic, the demand far outweighs the availability of classroom space. "We have an incredible wait list," Rios said. "It seems like lots of families made their way over to Lamorinda from San Francisco and Oakland and are now desperate to find care."

Down the road, at The Child Day School in Moraga, Director Emile Delgado-Olsen has around 100 children on the waitlist. The preschool has around 70 students but is licensed for 84 children. Why aren't there more children in the classroom and fewer on the waitlist? "We need more staff," Delgado-Olsen said.

There are 16 staff in total at The Child Day School, but Delgado-Olsen would love to have 18. The pandemic changed operations and protocols for places like TCDS, making the need for staff higher in order to accommodate the growing list of students. For example, in pre-pandemic times, all children played in a common area while they waited for the official preschool day to begin. "Now we don't mix kids from different classrooms. That way if there is a positive case in one classroom, we can quarantine that classroom without closing down the entire school."

Delgado-Olsen can happily work around these logistical adjustments if he can keep qualified teachers, who've completed 12 child care units, in the classroom. While Delgado-Olsen knows of many other preschools with long waitlists of children and a shortage of teachers, he says the off-the-beaten path location of Moraga, makes it extra challenging.

"This field is losing a lot of really good qualified teachers because they are getting priced out. If you're not already familiar with this area, you're not likely to drive an extra 30 minutes to get to Moraga."

Delgado-Olsen says his staff earns between \$20-\$24 per hour depending on units and experience. While the wage is higher than service jobs, he acknowledges it's difficult to make ends meet on that wage in the Lamorinda area.

"I wish there was a program that offered affordable housing to educators and caregivers or even (accessory) taxes that somehow went directly to teachers who wanted to live in the communities they're teaching in," Delgado-Olsen said, while reflecting on the difficult place educators are in. The salaries of preschool teachers who are primary breadwinners qualifies many of them for housing. Yet in Lafayette, the below market units on the city's website, the Towne Center, has a waiting list for those earning less than \$47,000. The site manager indicated a long waitlist for affordable units, while units available at the regular rate of \$4,400 were readily available.

Of all of the uncertainties in the preschool business, Delgado-Olsen knows one thing for sure: There's an influx of families with children eager to get into preschool in the Lamorinda area. And, until there's more staff, it'll be difficult to accommodate more children.

"Most preschools are hanging on by a thread these days. I feel very lucky to have the team and community we have at The Child Day School," Delgado-Olsen said. "And we're definitely desperate to hire."