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## Town council contenders participate in Candidates Night 2022

By Vera Kochan

Election Day is less than a month away, and in order to help voters make an informed decision on Nov. 8, the Moraga Citizens Network and Saint Mary's College co-hosted Candidates Night 2022 on Oct 3. MCN encouraged the community to email, in advance, potential questions and concerns for the candidates to address.

Two candidates, David Shapiro and Kendall Langen, are running for the two-year term that was remaining on former Council Member David Stromberg's term. The other two candidates, Steve Woehleke and Kerry Hillis, are running unopposed for the (two) four-year slots.

MCN President Shari Simon opened the evening, which also included candidates running for the Moraga School Board, as well as Moraga-Orinda Fire Districts 1 and 3 candidates. SMC's Executive Vice-President and Provost Corey Cook served as the moderator.

For brief biographies on each of the candidates, visit lamorindaweekly.com and look for the Aug. 31 article titled "Three Council Member Seats to Fill in Moraga; Four Candidates Running", under the archives header.

While Hillis and Woehleke's appearances were a mere formality due to the fact that they are as good as elected they, never-the-less, read their prepared responses to ques-

tions. Hillis, currently Moraga's Planning Commission Chair, was concerned about building more housing in Moraga especially with a constant threat of wildfires in a town that is virtually a cul-de-sac with regards to escape routes. With more housing comes increased congestion. On the other hand, he acknowledged that the state mandates of Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) could boost Moraga's shopping centers through mixed-use developments. Hillis also expressed the need for more affordable housing not only for seniors, but also first-responders, teachers, and college students who commute to Moraga. He is committed to making state leaders aware of Moraga's limitations to safely add a large influx of new housing.

Moraga Mayor Woehleke, spoke about affordable housing and explained to the viewers the requirements of RHNA, and that there is basically nothing municipalities can do about their assigned housing allocations. Any attempt to fight the state would result in penalties. He agreed that mixed-use housing would do much to revitalize both of the town's shopping centers, but that RHNA would still impact the limited public transportation, schools, fire risks, infrastructure and environment.

Shapiro believed that RHNA's affordable housing mandates will encourage both of Moraga's shopping centers

to revitalize and create new commercial enterprises. He felt that this was a great opportunity to build upon the things that the community really wants. Shapiro stated that the town must learn to limit its expenses; increase revenues (not through taxes); continue to seek grants for project funding; and add to the tax base through additional residents.

Asked to comment on prior town council meetings where civility among members was lacking, Shapiro felt that conditions have improved, noting that while there may be some disagreement it was clear that the current council does respect each other. As an attorney, he has the experience to look at situations and modify them in order to appease all parties involved.

Shapiro supports the idea of residents doing as much as they can to voluntarily help the environment and encourages residents to use mass transit or carpool. Another possibility is to offer incentives to the shopping center developers to subsidize a shuttle bus service.

Kendall Langen was invited to participate in Candidates Night 2022, but declined.

To view the video recording of the Candidates Night, visit <https://moragacitizensnet.org/2022-candidates-night-information/>

## Volunteers roll up their sleeves for Moraga Community Service Day project



Photo Vera Kochan

Moraga Community Service Day volunteers pull weeds in Camino Pablo's garden

By Vera Kochan

Following in the footsteps of Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill, Moraga Community Service Day Organizer and Council Member Mike McCluer felt that the town could use the same type of cleanup project that the other communities have done for nearly a decade.

After meeting with various town organizations (Rotary Club of Moraga, Moraga Valley Kiwanis, Moraga Lions Club, Moraga Garden Club, Moraga School District, Campolindo High School, Saint Mary's College, Moraga Chamber of Commerce and iKind), the ball began to roll. Banning on the fact that Moraga's residents have a history of rolling up their sleeves and pitching in, McCluer set up a website (<http://moragaserviceviceday.org>) with a sign-up

sheet listing the various locations and descriptions of each project.

Using the motto "care, give, connect," a couple of cleanups began on Sept. 30, but the official days of the event were held on Oct. 1-2.

Volunteers had plenty of locations and projects to choose from: non-perishable food drop-off for homeless, low-income and food insecure; painting flower pots with warm messages to seniors and shut-ins; weeding, litter pickup and pruning at Camino Pablo Elementary School, Los Perales Elementary School and Rheem Elementary School; donating blood; Lady Bug Bags assembling of hygiene bags for homeless and disadvantaged women; Campolindo Sustainable Garden weeding, mulch spreading and moving pavers; Moraga Commons Park plant-

ing shade trees near the bandshell and trimming dead branches from Manzanita bushes; Residential SMC Garden weeding, and removal of shrubs and debris; SMC Legacy Garden weeding and cleanup; fire abatement trail clearing; and Stafford Road weed removal and general cleanup.

Camino Pablo mom, Amenda Kung, like many of the parents volunteering at schools stated as she pulled weeds in the over-run garden: "It's great to do community service events and just help."

Fellow CP mom, Yueyue Ning agreed that she was there to "help the children and the school." Ning's son, Tony Li (8), had every intention to help his mom pull weeds, but when he saw how arduous the task appeared to be, opted instead for litter duty elsewhere on campus.

"We had an absolutely wonderful weekend for Moraga Community Service with overwhelming community support from 460 volunteers," said McCluer. "This includes 353 people participating in 13 volunteer projects and 107 volunteers donating food – all of which helps those in need, our schools and beautifies our town. Most volunteers were families looking to help the community, involve their kids and happily volunteered their time and resources.

Hoping to make this an annual event, McCluer added, "We are extremely pleased with the community spirit to volunteer for our events which significantly exceeded all our expectations. Thank you, Moraga!"

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