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Majority of union supported candidates for MOFD board poised to lose to challengers

By Sora O'Doherty

Two of the three candidates for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board who were supported by the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 1230 Political Activity Committee appear to have been defeated in the general election. While the results have yet to be certified by Contra Costa County Elections, Michael Donner is poised to lose his seat to challenger Michael Roemer in District 4, but is within striking distance (161 votes as of Nov. 18). In District 1, where incumbent Gregory Baitx did not run for reelection, it appears that Gregory Hasler has defeated Christopher Young, who ran on the union supported slate with Michael Donner and Steven Danziger. Danziger defeated challenger Vince Dell'Aquila to retain his seat. Hasler, Roemer and Dell'Aquila, were largely funded by Moraga-Orinda Citizens for Fire, although Hasler also made large donations to his own campaign.

Two Board members were not up for election as their terms do not expire until 2024, John Jex in District 2 and Craig Jorgens in District 5. In 2020 then incumbent Jex defeated a challenge from Nathan Smith, a firefighter-paramedic with the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District. In 2016 Jorgens defeated former Orinda mayor Victoria Smith, and in 2020 defeated an unusual challenge from Sharon Girdlestone, who appeared to be indecisive about whether she was actually running for election.

Interviewed after the election, Roemer pointed out that Donner and Young had been widely endorsed by the Democratic Party and local representatives. Roemer and Hasler each had many endorsements, including Orinda Mayor Dennis Fay, State Senator Steve Glazer, and Melanie Light of the Orinda Firewise Council. Roemer was endorsed by the all of the Orinda City Council members and Hasler was endorsed by the current and past mayors of Moraga. In addition, both were endorsed by the two remaining board members, Jex and Jorgans.

Roemer said that he had attempted to knock on every voter's door in his campaign. Hasler also knocked on many doors while campaigning. Roemer was quick to note that not being supported by the union was not indicative of the existence of any anti-union feelings.

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