

Town council meetings' audio/visual recorder, Mary-Jane Muller, set to retire



Photo Vera Kochan

Mary-Jane Muller operates "Mission Control" during town council meetings

By Vera Kochan

For just over eight and a half years, Moraga Administrative Assistant Mary-Jane Muller has been the reason why the town council meetings have been recorded for later viewing by constituents with nary a hitch.

With an unassuming door separating Muller from any in-session council meetings, she can almost be mistaken for the "Great and Powerful Wizard of Oz" when she occasionally pops out of the tiny room (which resembles Mission Control) to tell council members, "Your mike's not on" or "Talk to the mike."

At two meetings per month and any additional Special Meetings, Muller has been responsible for recording over 200 of them since her first three-camera setup in October 2015. "It was difficult to learn," she remembered, but she soon mastered what looks like a miniature recording studio with things like camera controls, audio, on-screen graphics and technical aspects of a Tricaster. She also helps to prep the council chambers prior to meeting time.

"Mary-Jane was a ray of sunshine in the Town Offices," stated Mayor Renata Sos. "She was always ready to help, go

above and beyond the call of duty, and pitch in – with a smile and a cheerful disposition. I appreciated her dedication to the people of this town and her wry sense of humor. I will miss her and wish her all the best in retirement."

Muller wavered when it came to deciding whether to retire or not and had planned to keep on working, but then she decided, "Why not? I'm looking forward to traveling, which was delayed due to COVID. My husband has been retired for a year, and a lot of our friends are, too. It'll be nice to do things anytime we want to." Her last day will be March 30.

"Moraga was lucky to have Mary-Jane at the control seat. She is organized, positive, knowledgeable, and ready to do whatever it takes to make things work," Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda said. "She has been the woman behind the curtain during our Council meetings. I will miss her and am grateful for her friendship."

During her tenure with the town, Muller has seen five town managers (including two interims) come and go. Running recording equipment twice a month was only a drop in the bucket with regards to her daily duties with the town. Maintaining a liaison between

department directors and staff; assisting the public with any requests or queries; coordinating public hearings and workshops by preparing agendas; maintaining databases; interpreting and applying town policies and procedures; researching and compiling data for special projects; editing and updating the town's website; and so much more can be added to her list of duties.

"Mary-Jane is another member of the Town Team who we are going to sorely miss," said Council Member Steve Woehleke. "Mary-Jane is a central hub for Town Government, very competently and efficiently handling a wide range of support functions, including handling the challenging Town Meeting broadcasting duties. This a significant accomplishment considering the wide range of personnel she has supported. I cannot think of a case in which she didn't fully meet expectations."

Looking back on her time as part of the town staff, Muller replied, "I've liked the job itself – it touches all of the departments. It's not so insular, and I can assist where necessary. My most favorite thing is the people who work here – my co-workers. Every department helps each other out."

Longtime former town clerk, Marty McInturf, who herself has recently retired said, "I had the pleasure of working with Mary-Jane for over eight years and found her to be conscientious and diligent in all her efforts on the Town's behalf. She was the backbone of the Council meetings, tirelessly running the cameras and ensuring that all Council meetings were properly recorded for later viewing and preserving the transparency that Moraga is known for. Mary-Jane was very supportive of her co-workers and was always the first to volunteer to help other departments when they were shorthanded. She will be missed by all who have worked with her and I join everyone in wishing her a happy and fulfilling retirement."

Cathy Chang named 2023 Moraga Citizen of the Year



Cathy Chang

Photo Stan Holcenberg

By Vera Kochan

In a very tight field of nominees, all with extraordinary credentials for qualifying as a Moraga Citizen of the Year recipient, Cathy Chang has emerged as the front runner. Chang's substantial amount of volunteerism not only serves to benefit children on their road to becoming responsible and community-minded adults, but touches on the homeless and less fortunate,

as well as the environment. A future article will feature her many accomplishments and highlights from the Celebration Dinner to be held from 6 to 9 p.m. on Friday, April 28 at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center (1700 School Street, Moraga).

To purchase tickets for Chang's 2023 Moraga Citizen of the Year event, visit www.moragavalleykiwanis.org or call (510) 499-0243.

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