

Nov. 8 Election Coverage

Catharine Baker Makes Her Reelection Case to Lamorinda Voters

By Nick Marnell



Catharine Baker Photo provided
[Editor's Note: This article was intended as a Lamorinda campaign forum for both incumbent Catharine Baker and challenger Cheryl Cook-Kallio, candidates to represent the 16th district in the state assembly. Questions were sent to Cook-Kallio's campaign manager but the challenger declined to answer them.]

"I am honored to represent the Lamorinda community and to support education, transportation, accountable state government, and local control for the good of our area," said Catharine Baker, a Republican. In addition to her appointment of Lamorinda residents to all of her advisory councils, including councils on education and public safety, she noted the six town halls in Lamorinda she held in the last 20 months, two in each town, all unscripted and open to all constituents. Four of those town halls were conducted jointly with Senator Steve Glazer, a Democrat.

Proposition 55

Baker opposes Proposition 55, a ballot measure that looks to slap those earning \$250,000-plus with a tax to support K-12 schools and community colleges. The tax increase would disproportionately

affect Lamorinda, which has a high percentage of wealthy residents.

"Prop. 30, passed in 2012, imposed the highest tax increases in California history. When voters passed Prop. 30, they were promised that the tax increases would be temporary and would phase out by 2019, and the funds would primarily go to help education during the budget shortfall. Prop. 55 breaks this promise to voters," Baker said. She noted that the extreme budget conditions that predated passage of Proposition 30 have passed, with the state recording a \$6.7 billion reserve in its Rainy Day Fund. What's more, billions of Proposition 55 dollars would go toward expanded Medical benefits, not education, she said.

Teacher Tenure and Seniority Rules

Many residents of Lamorinda live in the area because of the schools, but some residents are concerned about the tenure rules that can prevent dismissal of incompetent educators, which can negatively affect those schools. With the recent ruling on the Vergara lawsuit, the courts for all practical purposes threw the tenure problem back to the legislature.

The parent of school-age children, daughter of an award-winning public school teacher and former preschool board member, Baker said she believes everyone owes it to the teachers and kids to reform the rigid, antiquated teacher tenure and seniority rules that are a disservice to both the teachers and children.

"Current law also effectively puts most teachers up for tenure, or 'permanent status,' 18 months or so into their career, after which it is virtually impossible to dismiss

an ineffective teacher. This policy harms teachers and kids," Baker said. She pointed to a bill she authored, AB 1044, that would have allowed school districts not only to consider seniority, but also to consider the needs of the schools and students, when having to institute layoffs.

"I have three advisory councils comprised of local teachers, school board members, and principals from our area," she said. "All three advisory councils have confirmed we need to reform the seniority and tenure rules, and provide more meaningful professional development and feedback for both principals and teachers. I will continue to fight for those reforms."

Proposition 13

Some residents of Orinda resent that they are taxed at a higher rate than residents of Moraga to fund the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. The district's hands are tied, because the property tax allocation percentage is set by Proposition 13. Only the state legislature can correct an inequity like this.

"The state imposes mandates on our local communities for decisions that most affect our local lives and neighborhoods, such as housing – where it is built, how much is built, with what local input, and what type of housing is built. How the fire district distributes its funds within the district should best be left to the residents of the local district, who better know (the) area and its service needs, response times for emergencies, and geography, and not left to legislators in Sacramento," Baker said.

She did point out that there needs to be unanimity among the affected jurisdictions on whether to change the property tax alloca-

tions, how, and under what circumstances and criteria, before any state legislation would be appropriate to consider.

BART

Baker pulled no punches over the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, on which many Lamorindans rely but are equally frustrated with.

"BART is in great need of complete reform and long-term, responsible financial and capital planning. Its labor costs are grossly too high, while capital improvements and planning suffer. That is one reason that the very first bill I introduced as your assemblywoman was AB 528, a bill that would bring an end to BART strikes that have contributed to unsustainable labor costs and capital deficiencies," she said. Baker explained that if BART workers already agreed to a no-strike clause in their contract, and the contract expires, and they continue to be paid during the expiration period while negotiations continue, BART workers cannot strike. They have to honor the no-strike clause and cannot cherry-pick what provisions of the expired contract apply.

Though Baker said she does not take official positions on local measures, she did say that she will vote no on Measure RR, BART's \$3.5 billion request for infrastructure money. "Measure RR is not the right way to support BART funding, in no small part because the money that is supposed to be used for capital improvements of the train system itself can be used to back-fill the very generous labor costs that are unsustainable," she said.

Candidate Summary

"I am grateful to have the bipartisan endorsements of the en-

tire Lafayette and Moraga town councils, and both Democrats and Republicans on the Orinda City Council, as well as bipartisan school board members and law enforcement leaders from all across the Lamorinda community," Baker said. "I adore Orinda, love Lafayette, and amore Moraga, and am honored to represent these great communities. I would be grateful for your vote, and will work hard every single day to deserve it."

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Darlene K. Gee Orinda City Council



Darlene's Top Priorities

1. Complete Orinda's roads and drainage rehabilitation
2. Define a funding plan for ongoing road maintenance
3. Continue Orinda's excellent fiscal management
4. Plan a vibrant downtown while preserving our small town feel and beautiful natural environment

"Darlene's professional engineering background and financial management experience are essential assets in the ongoing effort to help Orinda successfully complete our roads program and maintain our strong fiscal standing."
— Amy Worth, Orinda City Councilmember

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Partial List of Endorsements

- | | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Steve Glazer, California State Senator, District 7 ✓ Victoria Smith, Mayor of Orinda ✓ Amy Worth, Orinda Councilmember ✓ Dean Orr, Orinda Councilmember ✓ Bobbie Landers, Former Mayor of Orinda ✓ Sue Severson, Former Mayor of Orinda ✓ Tom McCormick, Former Mayor of Orinda ✓ Terry Murphy, Chair, Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission ✓ Richard Nelson, Vice-Chair, Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission ✓ Linda Landau, Former President, OUSD Board and Orinda Association ✓ Pat Rudebusch, Former President, OUSD Board ✓ Inga Miller, Candidate, Orinda Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cara Hoxie, Candidate, OUSD Board ✓ Hillary Weiner, Candidate, OUSD Board ✓ Susie Epstein, Board Member, Acalanes Union High School District ✓ Steve Harwood, Lamorinda Arts Council Former President, Educational Foundation of Orinda ✓ Joan Kiekhaefer, Former President, Educational Foundation of Orinda ✓ Cindy Powell, President, Orinda Association ✓ Kate Wiley, Former President, Orinda Association ✓ Mark Roberts, Former President, Orinda Association ✓ Richard Westin, Co-Founder, Orinda Community Foundation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Brad Barber, Director, MOFD ✓ Alex Evans, Director, MOFD ✓ Robert Burt, Member, Orinda Finance Advisory Committee ✓ Carol Penskar, Member/Formal Chair, Orinda Finance Advisory Committee ✓ Julie Whitsitt, Former Commissioner, Orinda Parks and Recreation ✓ Cassandra Forth, Campaign Co-chair, Orinda Measure L ✓ Stephanie Davis, Former President, Orinda Junior Women's Club ✓ Tom Trowbridge, <i>Orinda Vision</i> ✓ <i>What's Up Downtown Orinda?</i> |
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