

Former Moraga town manager cleared of wrongdoing

By Nick Marnell



Jill Keimach Photo provided

Jill Keimach, the former Moraga town manager, was exonerated by the Alameda County District Attorney's Office following a six-month investigation into the le-

gality of a secret audio recording Keimach made of an Aug. 16, 2017 meeting with two Alameda city council members, Jim Oddie and Malia Vella, while Keimach was the Alameda city manager.

It is illegal in California to record a conversation without permission of all parties, but state law permits the recording of confidential communications for the purpose of obtaining evidence reasonably believed to relate to the commission of certain criminal conduct. The DA investigation concluded that Keimach did not break any laws, having had a reasonable belief going into the meeting that Oddie and Vella, a Teamsters lawyer, would attempt to bribe or extort her.

"I am extremely grateful to the District Attorney's Office for its careful examination of all the facts in this case and concluding that I told the truth in the face of extreme political pressure," Keimach said in a statement. "I paid a steep professional price but am relieved and heartened that the facts have finally come to light."

Keimach's saga began in July 2017 when the city of Alameda began a recruitment process to find a new fire chief for the Alameda Fire Department. Keimach, in charge of making the selection, asserted that she was under extreme political pressure from elected and appointed city officials to choose Capt. Domenick Weaver, the internal

candidate favored by the firefighters union, and felt that her continued employment as city manager was in peril if she did not comply.

Oddie and Vella scheduled the Aug. 16, 2017 meeting with Keimach to discuss the selection of the fire chief. As Keimach believed that the two council members might try to pressure her, she taped the meeting on her cell phone without consent of the parties. The DA investigation concluded that neither Oddie nor Vella committed any criminal offenses at that meeting, but that Keimach's belief that recording the meeting may have gathered evidence related to criminal conduct was not unreasonable con-

sidering all of the circumstances.

Keimach stood firm and appointed outside candidate Edmund Rodriguez as the city of Alameda fire chief on Oct. 3, 2017. She was put on administrative leave in March and departed the city in May under a \$945,000 separation agreement.

"I am relieved," Keimach said. "This was such a huge weight on me for such a long time." Neither Oddie nor Vella responded to a request for comment.

Keimach returns from a three-week vacation to India in mid-November, and she was mum about her future plans. "I'm weighing my options," she said.

PaperBox Bread & Pastry: new addition at Moraga Farmers' Market

By Sophie Braccini



Evan Ting in front of his farmers' market stand, PaperBox Pastry. Photo Sophie Braccini

The year-round Moraga Farmers' Market does not cease to diversify, attracting new vendors such as mushroom producers or unique grape growers (have you heard of "Thomcord" grapes?) as well as cooks, bakers and pastry chefs. One recent addition pushed the market toward the gourmet label: PaperBox Bread & Pastry, owned by Campo grad and now pastry chef Evan Ting.

A young father who graduated from Campolindo High School in 2008, Ting worked at Metro Lafayette while he was still in school. Erika Pringsheim-Moore gave Ting his first job in the kitchen, encouraging him to try his hand at food preparation. After graduation and because the idea of long years studying was not appealing to him, Ting decided to go the culinary route. He studied in Chicago,

where he met his wife. The pastry chef explains that they were both trained in French pastry baking techniques, and that their creations are infused with Californian and Asian tastes.

Ting worked at different restaurants after graduating, including the prestigious French Laundry, then decided that he wanted to try his hand at entrepreneurship and launched PaperBox Bread & Pastry last spring at the Moraga Farmers' Market.

On a typical Sunday morning the lines form quickly in front of Ting's white tent. Some are curious newcomers attracted by the seductive but still natural looking confections and pastries on display. Many of the clients are already aficionados who became quickly addicted to the cream puffs, macarons, stuffed English muffins, chocolate chip cookies, Pâtes de Fruit (a centuries old French candy recipe made with fruit, no preservatives or artificial flavors), and more.

Each week the selection changes because Ting works with the farmers' market fruit vendors. In season, he will have Meyer lemon and strawberry macarons, and peach, Thomcord grape or apple pates de fruits. He says that the vendors know each other at the market, taste each other's produce and confections, and create synergies.

In the meantime, Joao Magalhaes, a longtime Moraga resident, comes by for a weekly treat. The well-traveled man who has savored specialties all over the world and has visited the best of the Bay Area's restaurants has become appreciative of Ting and always gets something at his booth every Sunday. The day this reporter was there, Magalhaes raided the pates de fruits.

Luckily for Teresa Onoda, Magalhaes was not interested in the chocolate chip cookies. That is what the Moraga vice mayor likes best; she added that those are the best she ever had. Ting shares a little bit of his secret, explaining that he uses small chunks of bittersweet Guitard chocolate and adds a tiny amount of salt on top to magnify the sweetness.

If the weather is warm, Ting's wife can be seen at the market with their young child on her lap. She explains that she works during the week for Facebook's catering, while Ting takes care of their child and the business.

"This is what I was born to do," says Ting.

PaperBox Bread & Pastry can be found at the Moraga Farmers' Market every Sunday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. More pictures can be found at www.instagram.com/paperboxpastry/.

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