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Moraga's New Council

By *Sophie Braccini*

As we go to press, the results of the elections have not yet been certified by the Contra Costa Elections Division. Provisional ballots still have to be verified and the county has until December 2nd to certify the outcome. Moraga had three Council seats to fill; Karen Mendonca and incumbent Mike Metcalf have won two of those seats. Candidates Howard Harpham and Janice Kolbe have only a seven vote difference between them. They are in 3rd and 4th place respectively and that margin was not enough for Harpham to feel comfortable claiming victory.

"Janice and I agree on probably 90% of the issues," said Harpham, "I'll be happy for her if she ends up winning and of course will be looking forward to sitting on the Council if my 3rd place is confirmed." Janice Kolbe added, "At this point I would like to thank those who voted for me and continue to offer their support while we wait for the final results."

Karen Mendonca appears to have squeezed out a very narrow first place with an unofficial number of 4,012 votes compared to incumbent Mike Metcalf's 4002 votes, and she feels ready to sit with the four other Council Members. "I know all of them," says Mendonca, "I've talked with each of them, to Howard and Janice during the campaign, and I know Dave Trotter, Ken Chew, and Mike Metcalf from their work on the Council." Mendonca is looking forward to a Council committed to working together, treating each other with respect, and prioritizing in the best interests of Moraga.

Mendonca sees her election as a sign that people chose ethics and professionalism over other issues.

The campaign to defeat her was aggressive, but Mendonca says, "What makes me the happiest is to put everything behind and represent the people who chose civility in the Town of Moraga."

Mike Metcalf, running a very close second, is also glad that the campaign is over. "The new elected citizens are very good people and will be terrific additions to the Council," believes Metcalf, "they are up to it and there will be less tolerance for nonsense on the Council."

The present Council seemed to have difficulty reaching a state of cooperation and compromise-building. The new Council Members believe that situation will change. "I'm hoping that this group will get together, establish rapport, agree upon behavioral norms and begin the longer process of building trust," says Mendonca, who would recommend and support some type of retreat or team building opportunity for the newly formed Council.

"What some people regard as 'team building' is not always what it is cracked up to be," says Metcalf, "Real team building happens when a group actually works on solving real problems. That's when personalities become clear, and where working relationships begin."

"Trust is something that must be built over time," agrees Mendonca, "in an environment where people are supportive of one another and still communicate their own ideas and thoughts with respect. We owe the people of Moraga a Town Council of which they can be proud."

With the certification happening no later than December 2nd, the new Council should be sworn in at the following Council meeting, on December 10th.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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