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Meet the Moraga Council Candidates: Karen Mendonca

By Sophie Braccini



Karen Mendonca

Moraga's cultural level."

Karen Mendonca is running for a second term on the Council. She has lived in Moraga for 17 years. Most of her career was devoted to administration and counseling in higher education. In her last position, she served as vice president of student affairs, and took early retirement at age 51. Mendonca has also served in Parks and Recreation. She is proud of the Council's achievements in the last four years that include fiscal responsibility, economic development, enhancement of the relationship with Saint Mary's College, the improvement of the Camino Pablo School field, and the successful hiring of a very talented town manager. "One of my favorite accomplishments in 2011 was the founding of the monthly 'Ask the Mayor and Town Manager' open, public meetings at Terzetto Cuisine," she noted.

In the next 4 years, Mendonca would like to see the sales tax (Measure K) pass to begin to address the town's infrastructure needs. "If the sales tax measure is approved, we should be able to see dramatic and ongoing improvements in the Town of Moraga," she said.

Mendonca ran a pro-open space campaign and then supported the Rancho Laguna Development project that allows construction on a minor ridge line. "I do not see a contradiction," she said. "I vigorously campaigned for Measure K (MOSO 2008) in the last election. I had hoped that it would have been supported by a majority of Moraga

voters, but it was not. I told supporters at that time, if Measure K failed and I was elected, I would use our current General Plan when making land use decisions. It is the ethical and legal approach to making fair decisions." The General Plan will be reviewed in the coming years and Mendonca said she's looking forward to the opportunity to determine whether the current General Plan is adequate in its current guidelines.

She added that it is the responsibility of all members of the Moraga Town Council to make land use decisions that are fair and in the best interest of the Town of Moraga. These principles also guided her in her approach to the issue of off-leash dogs at Rancho Laguna Park.

"Parks are meant to be shared by all," she said. "After more than three years of dedicated work by the Park and Recreation Commission and Town staff, and after more than 40 public hearings, meetings, and opportunities for input, it is very disappointing that a final agreement respectful of the widely diverse needs of all our citizens was unable to be reached." For the future of the park, Mendonca said she will listen to citizens to see if there is an interest in maximizing access and safety for all users of Rancho Laguna Park.

Winemaking will also be looked at in the coming year. "It can be a very positive part of our community," she said, "and the Town is already in discussions with wine producers and neighbors in order to identify collaborative solutions to concerns such as commercial truck activity, public events, and commercial sales."

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