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## Moraga Candidates Speak to a Crowd

By Sophie Braccini



A few hundred interested Moraga residents attended the Moraga Citizens Network's Candidates Night. Photos Andy Scheck

asked about what they would do if the measure failed. They concurred that the Town had no choice but to seek other sources of funding and they would support asking residents again to approve new taxes, but two of them, Roger Wykle and Seth Freeman, indicated that they would also look for ways to reduce the Town's expenses.

Wykle and Freeman were also in agreement on the question of staff pensions. Where Mendonca and Arth responded to a question on employees' pensions that the Town had no liability at this time, Wykle and Freeman showed preference for 401K plans. Wykle for future hires, while Freeman seemed ready to change current employees' pensions now to 401K plans.

Another question divided the 4 candidates the same way-the issue of off-leash hours at Rancho Laguna Park. Both Wykle and Freeman said that the park had been functioning well without a fence or problems for years and should be left untouched; while Mendonca and Arth firmly stated their preference for a fence to separate dogs from other park users.

The similarities between Wykle and Freeman ended there. Their views regarding development are quite different. Of the 4, Wykle was the candidate most opposed to development, especially in open space. The three other candidates said that Moraga needed to preserve its rural character, and Freeman and Arth also affirmed the right of property owners to develop their land according to the Town's laws. Mendonca added that she was looking forward to a revision of the General Plan's provisions on ridgeline and hillside development as the public indicates what it wants in terms of strengthening current rules.

Mendonca, being the only incumbent at the debate, defended the work done by the Council over the past 4 years. She highlighted that the Town's operating budget had been balanced all along. That part was not challenged by any candidate, but Freeman, who pointed several times during the debate to instances when the Town had, in his view, wasted money.

Arth indicated that his position on wineries had somewhat evolved over the past weeks and that he was now favorable to the creation of a Lamorinda wine label, but he reiterated his opposition to large commercial wineries in residential areas.

The candidates remained very courteous with one another. At one point, two candidates even congratulated Freeman for his proposal to create a teen center in the old post office.

Three seats are open on the Council.

The Other Debates - Moraga School Board

School Board candidates will debate again tomorrow night

On the morning of October 1 the three candidates for two seats on the Moraga School Board debated at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School. Parker Colvin, Dexter Louie (incumbent) and Shari Simon will debate again on the evening of October 11.

The ubiquitous issue for the District is the budget. The candidates indicated how aware they are of the issue and discussed their ideas to resolve the crisis.

Simon, a former vice president at Oracle, insisted that the District needs to measure the educational value of

its investments in order to make a decision of what should be cut, if cuts became unavoidable. She believes that the District needs to complete the strategic plan the Superintendent has been working on. Her priorities are professional development, technology, and implementation of best practices.

Colvin, head of municipal underwriting for Stone & Youngberg, said that we should expect a miracle and the District needs to try again to pass a parcel tax to secure a funding source independent of the State. Colvin has helped hundreds of districts throughout the State sell bonds that have raised billions of dollars for facilities projects; he believes that his financial expertise will be needed to build the District's long term financial plan.

Louie, a M.D., believes that his 14 years on the Board give him a wealth of practice and experience needed in these difficult times. He too thinks that the school will need to try again to pass a parcel tax, otherwise the district will have to cut positions and increase class size. He believes that better communication and consensus building will help to reach that goal.

The next debate will take place in the auditorium at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. tomorrow, October 11.



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