# LAMORINDA WEEKLY **Bob Priebe: 38 years serving Moraga** By Sophie Braccini

town manager office in a few

days, he will leave behind 38 years

of work history, a lifetime. Most of

the manager's career developed in

law enforcement until he was ap-

pointed town manager almost two

years ago. While Priebe has ample

right to claim retirement, his depar-

police officer, Moraga was not his

dream job. Even today, Priebe says

that he was born to be a Berkeley

cop. A friend who was part of that

police force showed Priebe during

a night ride-along how the adrena-

line rush one gets on the job can

make life exciting. Making people

safe and arresting bad guys was the

most important part of Priebe's mo-

tivation. But destiny did not have

Berkeley in its long-term plans for

1978 and worked in Berkeley for

18 months, and in his own words

Priebe was sworn in on Aug. 28,

Priebe.

41

When he started out as a young

ture was still a surprise.



### Moraga

#### **Public Meetings**

#### **City Council**

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 7 p.m. Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

#### **Planning Commission**

Monday, Dec. 18, 7 p.m. Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

#### **Design Review**

Monday, Dec. 26, 7 p.m. Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

### **School Board Meetings**

**Moraga School District** Thursday, Jan. 9, 7 p.m. Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium 1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga www.moraga.k12.ca.us See also AUHSD meeting page A2

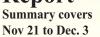
Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements **Town of Moraga:** 

www.moraga.ca.us

Phone: (925) 888-7022

**Chamber of Commerce:** www.moragachamber.org Moraga Citizens' Network: www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

## Moraga **Police** Report



**Alarms Traffic** 911 Calls (incl. hang-ups) **Noise Calls Suspicious Circumstances Suspicious Subject Suspicious Vehicle** Burglary, Auto St. Mary's Rd./Moraga Rd.

Death, non-criminal location n/a **Domestic Disturbance** 50 block Ashbrook Pl.

200 block Scofield Dr. Fish & Game Larch Ave/Sparrow Ct.

**ID** Theft 300 block Constance Pl. 20 block Laird Dr.

Hit and Run Moraga Rd/Rheem Blvd. **Medical Hospital** 100 block Miramonte Dr.

**Mentally Ill Commit** Saint Mary's College Theft, Petty

Safeway **Unknown Problem** 400 block Birchwood Dr.

Vandalism 500 block Center St. Rheem Valley Shopping Center **Warrant Service** 

10 block Francisca Dr. Warrant Arrest 10 block Francisca Dr.

it was the most fun he ever had on academy instructors, Tom Simms, had his eyes set on the young officer to start a brand new police department in Moraga from the ground up, and took him on a tour of the place. Priebe remembers that the town felt more alive in the early '80s, with more retail and the fresh look of a place recently built. Simms also told Priebe that this department would one day become a Lamorinda op-Bob Priebe LW archive Then Bob Priebe leaves his

The young man was still not interested, but Simms called Priebe's wife, Tracy, then a young mother of an 11-month-old baby. She was not as excited as her husband was about the Berkeley job; in fact, every time the phone rang, she was uneasy. The Priebes, now married for 40 years, discussed the opportunity ... and the rest is history.

When Priebe started in Moraga, 10 officers were in charge, with one part-time chief, Larry Olson, who was also working for the East Bay Regional Park District. The men had the same uniform as their EBRPD counterparts, the cars also came from that agency with patches on the doors saying Moraga, and the office was located in a trailer behind the fire station. At first, the men were independent contractors, then they created a bargaining unit, and it was not until 2006 that the department became a part of the California Public Employees Retirement Sys-

Priebe tested the waters for the job. But one of his former police other opportunities and almost left a couple of times, but Moraga had its own interesting challenges, and the officer was regularly promoted until he became chief in 2009.

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There are so many interesting stories from Priebe's Moraga life, including the time a woman came to the police department with a WWII Japanese hand grenade she wanted to get rid of that turned out to still be very much operational; Priebe keeps a piece of the grenade on his desk as a reminder of how quickly things can go wrong.

Priebe believes that his years in the police department were well spent, with a lot of good and a little bad, including a lot of educational activities and building trust with the residents. He is convinced that Moraga's independent police department costs residents much less than the officers contracted by Orinda and Lafayette through the county sheriff's office. He believes that an independent Lamorinda police force would make sense and be a good financial solution for the three cities

When Town Manager Jill Keimach left Moraga in 2016, Priebe became interim town manager. A few days later, the culvert under Rheem Boulevard collapsed and a sinkhole formed. In September of the same year he was offered and accepted the permanent position. He says that until then, he thought that the police department was getting all the com-

spective as town manager.

In Moraga, residents have direct access to the manager. Priebe said he was surprised by the number of emails and phone calls he received daily from residents - some friendly, but most expressions of displeasure. He said he made a point to respond to everyone, but got frustrated at the amount of what he perceives as disinformation circulating on social media. He believes that this made his job, and his department heads' jobs harder.

Priebe explains that while the town was incorporated in 1974 with a promise for minimal government, people nonetheless demand maximum service. He thinks that residents have to realize that they own the town's infrastructure and assets and that it requires funds to be maintained. He also believes that the level of staff today is at a minimum, as compared to surrounding communities.

Among Priebe's last public appearances were the reopening of the Rheem Boulevard and of the Canyon Bridge, where he praised his team for a work well done in spite of administrative hurdles.

He made a lot of friends in Moraga over the years. He really loved being a part of Moraga Valley Kiwanis where he discovered the pleasure of giving back. But he has no regrets about retiring. He might seek new adventures in the future, but he will certainly take a few plaints in town; he got a shift in permonths to enjoy life and his family.

## Transitions in Moraga – interim town manager to be hired on Dec. 13 By Sophie Braccini

rector Ellen Clark or Ading their management positions in Moraga, they give a similar response: a small staff does not pro- be headed by Senior Planner Derek vide upward opportunities for managers; the only possibility to get a more important job is to change the city. But why is mid-level staff also leaving Moraga?

The exodus of Moraga staff is severe. The planning department is depleted with only two planners left, now that Associate Planner Coleman Frick announced he is leaving Moraga, and the administrative department is now reduced to only one person with the concomitant resignation of Administrative Services Technician Tina Davis. Transition will take time since the interim town manager may not be tasked with replacing the missing department heads, which will be the choice of the future permanent town manager. Aside from the police force personnel, approximately one third of Moraga town staff has left the town over the past six-months.

Cunningham said that no one on her staff was qualified to become the interim administrative director; when she spoke last week, she said that everything would be organized before her departure to

ruption in services, but she was not ministrative Services Director Amy sure who would replace her. Yuliya Cunningham why they are leav- Elbo, the town's accountant, is the only person left.

The planning department will Farmer, with the support of Brian Horn, associate planner, and Kelly Clancy, senior administrative assistant. Clark said that it is likely that the town will call in consultants on an ad hoc basis to complete on-going projects.

The town will approve at its Dec. 13 meeting the hiring of James Holgersson as interim town manager. The staff report prepared for the Dec. 13 meeting indicates that Holgersson has over 40 years of experience in government management in California and beyond. "He has served as the City Manager and he said. "The town will get through Interim City Manager for the City of Modesto; Deputy City Manager Neighborhoods for the City of San nomenon from the recent past in-Jose; City Manager for the City of

City Administrator of the City of Davenport, Iowa," states the report.

noted that each of the department heads that resigned had their own reasons for seeking promotions and higher paying positions in other cities and that the town of Moraga has historically been an incubator for people working in municipal government positions. "They come here to become first-time department heads in a smaller community, and depart for greener pastures," this, as we have in the past."

Other examples of this pheclude former town manager Jill King.

hen one asks Planning Dimake sure that there is no inter- Arlington, Texas; City Manager Keimach who was hired as the for the City of Waco, Texas; City Alameda City Manager after five Manager for the City of Kalama- years in Moraga, or former adminzoo, Michigan; City Administrator istrative services director Stephanie for the City of Germantown, Ten- Hom who returned to a senior post nessee; and Senior Assistant to the in Oakland when Libby Schaaf was elected mayor.

> Yet, having about a third of Council Member Dave Trotter staff, police department aside, resigning within a few months of the declaration of fiscal emergency is concerning and raises questions regarding the continuity of operations. Some of the big projects that will need to be continued at the beginning of 2018 include whether or not the town will seek more revenue for storm drains, the completion of the ridgeline and hillside provide excellent service here, get development rules, and the start noticed by our neighboring cities, of MCE as a new energy provider. The only department heads still in place with historical knowledge of the town are city clerk Marty Mc-Inturf, Public Works Director Edric Kwan, and Chief of Police Jon B.

## **Just Sold with Multiple Offers!**



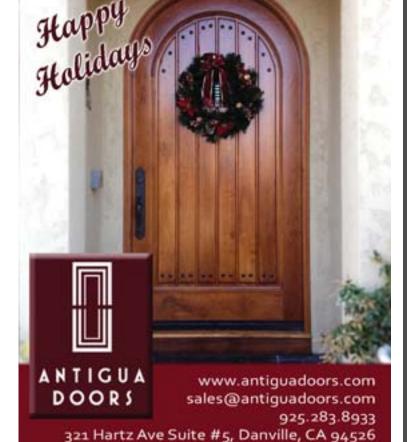


### 20 Wandel Drive, Moraga | Sold for \$895,000

Situated on Wandel Drive, this classic ranch home has 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, a fabulous floor plan and is conveniently located minutes from shopping, schools, parks and public transportation.

### **Home Features:**

- \* Large Spacious Bedrooms
- \* Kitchen with Adjoining Breakfast Nook
  - \* Hardwood Floors
  - \* Fresh Interior Paint
    - \* 2 Fireplaces
- \* Secluded Backyard with Patio Surrounded by Mature Trees
  - \* 2-Car Garage with Additional Storage
  - \* Access to Top Rated Moraga Schools







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