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## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I am writing about the City Ventures (CV) development planned for scenic Moraga Way. Even though CV violates the semi-rural nature of the town, the Moraga General Plan (MGP) and the Moraga Specific Plan (MOSP), the town keeps defending the development by referring to the MOSP. The MOSP violates and contradicts the MGP. According to real estate attorneys, the specific plan should never violate or contradict the General Plan. The General Plan has precedence over the Specific Plan. CV violates numerous clauses in both the General and Specific plans, especially the scenic corridor. Even a design review board member expressed this.

The MGPlan's Guiding Principle 2 is: "Protect and enhance the character and quality of residential neighborhoods, maintaining a predominantly single family, character in a semi-rural setting."

In one of the first proposals CV stated: "Even though this does not adhere to the semi-rural nature of the town..."

Both Plans continually state: "Protect existing residential neighborhoods." CV claims it is building in the likeness of Moraga Country Club (MCC). This is not true. There are no 3 story houses, the houses' setback are at least 35 -56', and vegetation is extensive at MCC and Moraga. CV's density is at least 3 times MCC. CV tries to deceive us by claiming their 3 story multiplex units are 2 stories with a loft (they used to say 3 stories until residents complained (it violates MGP LU1.3)). CV will block all of our views. CV front doors are located 8 -9' from the sidewalk on Country Club Drive (CCD). Children and pets love to run out of front doors... (onto CCD!). The lot's oak trees will be cut down.

There has been a continual disregard for the present residents of CCD and Moraga. Initially the town wanted all traffic to shunt onto St. Andrews Drive and CCD with no entrance or exit from Moraga Way! One of CV's plans included taking away the present cut away on CCD to match it's own entrance. The present residents would have to take 5-6 turns to get to Moraga Way and the shocking fact that a couple of houses suddenly have a cut away appear at the front of their house! When you drive down Moraga Way and Road, do you see anything like this? No, because this violates the scenic corridor. When Moraga set the MOSP, Lafayette and Orinda threatened to sue Moraga. Moraga then claimed the developments would be for elderly or student residents. This and other plans are not intended for such residents. Orinda and Lafayette may want to pay attention. The traffic density will increase exponentially.

Moraga residents believe in smart development that will enhance Moraga. CV does not fit in Moraga. Please do not let this project be "fast tracked" like Shauna Brekke Read, planning director, admitted in a Design Review meeting. It is refreshing to observe planning commissioner, Theresa Onoda's concern that CV is not in line with the neighborhood and recognized that residents are very unhappy with this proposed development.

Margaret Gee  
Moraga

Editor:

Not many years back the current owners of the Rheem & Orinda Theaters stated that the theaters would be showing indie films. Some thought this meant films like those shown at the "Dome" & a few movie theaters in Berkeley. Sad to say that did not happen.

When the "Dome" closed it appeared to be the opportunity to show those indie films. Sad to say that did not happen.

Based on the number of people who attended movies at the "Dome" one has to think that many Contra Costa residents would prefer to attend a theater in Moraga rather than travel to Berkeley. An opportunity overlooked?

J.P. Duffy  
Moraga

Elections

Editor:

I am asking you to vote for Christine Deane for the Contra Costa Board of Education, on the November ballot.

Christine is just the sort of person you would like working for the local schools and our children. She was appointed as a trustee of the Contra Costa Board of Education after a rigorous application process, and was chosen over many other candidates. She has been deeply involved with the Contra Costa County public schools for the past 30 years as an educator, parent, and currently as a County Board of Education Trustee.

I have known Christine for 18 years and have taught with her in the San Ramon School District. She is very bright and articulate, an incredibly hard worker, and a problem solver. Christine has high morals, is a very kind and thoughtful person and is always willing to help out others. You can find out more about Christine's background on her website [www.cdeane.com](http://www.cdeane.com).

Sallie Nelson  
Orinda

Editor:

I encourage Lamorinda and Walnut Creek voters to return Susie Epstein and Nancy Kendzierski to the Acalanes Union High School District Governing Board. I serve with them and enthusiastically support them for re-election.

Susie brings strong financial leadership, and experience as a distinguished parent volunteer at Miramonte High School. Susie always asks the hard questions to ensure we make good decisions on behalf of the 5,000 students we serve each year.

Nancy is running as a candidate after her appointment to a vacant seat. She has led the PTA's regional legislative activity, and is an expert on the state's support of its schools. Nancy's experience helped create our first "Local Control Accountability Plan."

Our district has weathered financial storms and maintained its programs at the high level of quality and impact that our students expect. We have maintained salary and benefits for all employees. Continuity matters for our district's leadership. I hope you will join me in voting for Susie Epstein and Nancy Kendzierski for the Acalanes school board.

Sincerely,  
Richard Whitmore  
Lafayette

Editor:

As a current Orinda School Board member, elected in November, 2012, I know how important a job it is that we have. Some of our roles and responsibilities include:

1. Setting direction, 2. Establishing an effective and efficient structure, 3. Providing support, 4. Ensuring accountability, and 5. Providing community leadership.

I am writing to ask you to vote for Carol Brown in the Orinda School Board election, since Carol will be "the breath of fresh air" that is so greatly needed on our board. She is an independent thinker, fiscally responsible, and listens to all sides.

Carol is a highly responsible child advocate who works for CASA, (Court Appointed Special Advocates). She is the mother of 5 children, has been an active parent volunteer in our Orinda Schools, and has lived in Orinda for 22 years.

Carol Brown will fight for much needed increased transparency, accountability, and community receptivity to students, parents, teachers, and community members. We can trust Carol Brown to be strong enough to be sure the dog wags the tail.

I encourage you to join me in voting for Carol Brown for Orinda School Board, on November 4th!

Sarah Butler

Orinda

Editor:

Ballots are being mailed for the upcoming election and soon Orinda voters will determine who will fill the three open seats on the School Board. To many families and educators, this is an extremely important election - a chance to change the caustic atmosphere in the District. Parent groups have been prevented from spending funds they have raised on programs to expand educational opportunities and improve facilities. Programs have been cut despite an approximate 24% budget surplus. Our Teachers' pay has now fallen under the median for Contra Costa County. Parents of children at Wagner Ranch were repeatedly dismissed even though serious complaints over discipline and other issues were raised. Over and over, parents and educators have complained that our District's Superintendent has created an environment of dysfunction instead of one that honors collaboration and excellence. This election is our opportunity to do what we do best as voters - elect new leaders for a new direction.

As you may know, there is a 3-2 split on the Board, in which the majority of Members have consistently sanctioned the actions of the Superintendent instead of exercising independent judgment on a range of important issues. The majority vote includes the incumbent candidate Julie Rossiter. In order for families and educators to have a voice in the District, we need to upend this voting block. Both Carol Brown and Jason Kaune are not only concerned about the current Board dynamic, but are committed to creating an open, respectful and transparent environment should they be elected. Further, both candidates strike me as people with an independent spirit, and their contributions to the Board should prevent the problems we see with the current Board majority. I'm hoping you'll join me and many other concerned parents, and the Orinda Teachers Association, in electing Carol Brown and Jason Kaune to the School Board this fall.

Cimon Starr

Orinda

Editor:

My husband Neil and I moved our family to Orinda 14 years ago "for the schools". Since then, we have learned a great deal more about the teachers, the administrators, the superintendent and the way in which the OUSD school board operates.

On the plus side - Orinda has great parent participation and community funding, dedicated school site administrators and teachers, who provide high quality education in safe school sites.

This November, there are three school board seats in play. Two incumbents chose not to run - I believe in part due to the frustration concerning the way in which the district has been governed.

After almost a decade of attending OUSD Board meetings, I would strongly encourage voters to support all newcomers - Brown, Kaune and Weiner rather than the incumbent Rossiter.

Rossiter was given four years to demonstrate what she would do - during which time she also

served as OUSD Board President. Rossiter was an ineffectual Board President, had a habit of not allowing public comment when warranted and most concerning, her dismissive demeanor toward anyone who came to the OUSD Board seeking solace after harsh treatment from a teacher, administrator or other was truly alarming.

Ms Brown brings a child-center focus, Mr Kaune is an ethics attorney and Ms Weiner, a relative newcomer to the community, who appears to have actively involved herself in the schools, strike me as the best team to move the district forward during challenging times.

Please consider voting for Brown, Kanue and Weiner - the candidates most likely to bringing the needed breath of fresh air to the OUSD Board.

Thank you,  
Bekki Van Voorhis-Gilbert  
Orinda

Editor:

Please join us in supporting Julie Rossiter for Orinda School Board. Julie is the only incumbent running and her breadth of knowledge and experience make her the ideal candidate for this important role.

Julie has three children currently in the Orinda schools, and has spent years as an active volunteer in our community. In addition to her role on the School Board, she currently serves on the board of the Friends of the Orinda Library and the Miramonte Parents Club.

In Julie's four years on the School Board, including serving as President in 2013, all five of the OUSD schools were honored as California Distinguished Schools.

Julie is a dedicated and collaborative leader who demonstrates high integrity and transparency in all of her actions. She welcomes the opportunity to discuss the issues currently facing the District and regularly updates her blog and social media platforms on issues ranging from Common Core to Zero Tolerance to Fiscal Stability.

Julie sees issues from all sides given her experience as a parent, volunteer, and business litigator. Her ability to solve problems, negotiate with others in a positive and collaborative manner, and advocate for change when necessary, allows her to build consensus and obtain results.

Julie is also a wonderful person - she is a kind, thoughtful, active and engaged mother, wife, friend, and member of our community - the type of person we want representing our community and our children.

People who know Julie, and have had the opportunity to work with her, agree. Julie has been endorsed by numerous current and former School Board Trustees, City Council Members, former Mayors, Citizens' of the Year, and countless Parent Club Presidents' and community volunteers. We support Julie Rossiter for Orinda School Board and urge you to do the same. The Orinda Union School District, our children, and the community as a whole, will benefit from her experience, dedication, and leadership.

Sincerely,  
Seanna and Jeff Allen  
Orinda

Editor:

Bob Thompson is the best candidate for the Orinda City Council. He has substantial financial expertise that no other candidate comes even close to matching. (Let's not forget recent examples of other Cities in California neglecting their finances and going broke.) But Bob is more than just a financial expert. He's ethical. He's genuine, and he cares about his community and his family. He doesn't just talk. He listens and he collaborates. He gets things done. Join me and many others in Orinda and vote for Bob Thompson.

Paula Goodwin  
Orinda

Editor:

Ken Chew, our current Town of Moraga Mayor, who has served for almost eight years on the Moraga Town Council, is running for re-election to the Moraga Town Council for a third term. Ken has demonstrated that he is an effective leader as the mayor in 2010 and 2014. Under his watch, the Town Council meetings have been civil, transparent and efficient.

The reason why I will be endorsing and voting for Ken--and encouraging you to join me--is because of his leadership priorities. His voting record has stood consistently for what is fair and best for the entire community, and I have been impressed by his courage to stand up to pressure from those who are solely special interest advocates.

Ken has also been a staunch supporter for creating the town's Climate Change Committee, which is now recommending steps to curb the pollutants that blight our society's healthy future. We need Ken's leadership to preserve and enhance the blessed quality of life we enjoy in Moraga.

Sincerely,  
Jeremy Fish  
Moraga

Editor:

Four years ago I wrote this paper to encourage Moraga voters to support Dave Trotter for re-election to the Moraga Town Council. At that time he had demonstrated an integrity and commitment to the positions he had run on in his initial campaign in 2006. His re-election validated the trust the voters placed in him. His leadership on these issues since 2010 further validates the importance of re-electing Dave to the Town Council.

Dave has been a consistent supporter of the preservation of open space in the Town. He was the only council member who voted to oppose ridgeline homes in the Rancho Laguna II project in 2011, upholding the policies of our General Plan. He will continue to vote to protect the Towns' remaining open ridgelines. His current work as a member of the Town's Ridgeline and Hillside Steering Committee is needed to strengthen the Town's open space ordinances and policies.

While serving as our mayor and as the Chair of the Planning Commission Dave has demonstrated the ability to encourage full and open discussion of controversial issues, respecting the views of all speakers. He is an independent thinker and a problem solver. We need these qualities on the Town Council.

Please vote to re-elect Dave Trotter to the Moraga Town Council on November 4.

Sincerely,  
Malcolm J. Sproul  
Moraga

Editor:

Dave Trotter is our choice for the Moraga Town Council.

He has ably served the Town as a councilmember for the past eight years. During that time he has consistently demonstrated his leadership abilities and commitment to the community values that Moraga residents cherish.

As mayor, Dave served on the 2009 Revenue Enhancement Committee. Out of that effort came Measure K, a realistic strategy for funding much-needed repairs to Moraga's neighborhood streets and other critical infrastructure. Dave campaigned for the successful passage of Measure K in 2012,

and last year as mayor oversaw successful implementation of the first year of the street repair program.

Dave has consistently shown fiscal discipline in approving only balanced budgets. And Dave has been an advocate for our community's young people, spearheading new efforts to work cooperatively with our local schools to jointly plan for and build improved recreational facilities and sports fields.

The Town Council needs proven leadership as it deals with the opportunities and issues that face Moraga. Dave Trotter's understanding of these issues, sensible decision-making, and commitment to strong fiscal discipline make him the best candidate for election to the Council. Check out his web site at [www.davetrotter.com](http://www.davetrotter.com) for more information.

Carolyn and Tom Westhoff  
Moraga

Editor:

I intend to vote for Dave Trotter's re-election to the Moraga Town Council and hope that your readers will join me in doing so.

40 years ago the Town of Moraga was formed in response to unbridled County-fostered growth pressures that threatened Moraga's semi-rural environment. The main thoroughfares into and out of Moraga were severely congested during commute hours and high-density townhouse developments were being proposed that would have unalterably changed Moraga's character. Today, that same, severe commute-hour traffic problem still persists. And we are once again being threatened by high-density, urban townhouse development proposals that, I believe, would permanently disfigure our Town and damage our semi-rural environment. (One needs only to look at the story poles on Moraga Way next to the firehouse to see the reality of that threat.) Based upon his record on the Moraga Town Council over the past eight years, Dave Trotter has shown that he is well qualified to deal head-on with these issues and I believe he can be counted upon to energetically protect our Town's environment and semi-rural character.

Dick Olsen  
Moraga

Editor:

Forty years ago Moraga residents chose to become a "town" instead of a "city", recognizing the open, semirural character they cherished. Today, maintaining Moraga's unique balance needs energy and commitment from citizens, town staff, and elected officials.

Moraga needs Teresa Onoda.

The combined pressures of development and budget are real and unrelenting. There is not one development issue, but many. The cumulative impact of multiple projects on schools, roads, utilities, Town budgets, and Moraga's distinctive ridgelines could drastically alter the community we love if not carefully managed.

Our quality of life depends on people like Teresa who have lived here, studied the issues, done their homework, attended the meetings, given their time, and placed the long-run interests of the Town first in their priorities. She represented the Town's interests well on the Planning Commission, and will do so again on the Town Council. Her commitment to the Town's future is clear, and will endure long past Election Day.

Please vote for Teresa Onoda on November 4.

Dan Smith  
Moraga

Editor:

Please join me in voting for Teresa Onoda and Dave Trotter, by far the best two candidates in this year's Moraga Town Council election. I do not know them as friends, and thus my opinions are based solely on first-hand observation of their actions on the Planning Commission and Town Council.

All the candidates claim they will protect our scenic corridors and ridgelines as the law requires, and that they will listen to all points of view, but in reality not all the current candidates have stood by their word once elected.

At the September 10th Town Council meeting Mayor Chew voted to approve the Via Moraga project, a dense development of 3,000 square foot single family houses on tiny 4,000 square foot lots. These new houses will be on a busy scenic corridor in the middle of a commercial district, will block views of Rheem Ridge, and will pose some serious challenges for pedestrian and vehicular traffic and safety. Chew's "arguments" included: "Why delay the developer?" and "I'm not sure the view is a concern."

At the October 1st Candidates' Forum, when asked his opinion on Moraga's existing open space regulations, he said only that he looks forward to the recommendations from the Open Space Committee currently studying the issue. After 8 years on the Council applying these regulations, shouldn't he have his own opinion on these regulations' adequacy to protect the ridgelines he lists as his first priority in his campaign literature?

In response to concerns raised by the public, and in keeping with their stated goals to protect views from scenic corridors, Dave Trotter voted against the Via Moraga project, as did Teresa Onoda on the Planning Commission.

Please support Onoda and Trotter in this year's critical Town Council election. They have the sensitivity and dependability to represent us.

Ferenc Kovac  
Moraga

Editor:

Please join me in voting for Teresa Onoda for Moraga Town Council on November 4.

I live adjacent to the Moraga Center Specific Plan area, which is slated for hundreds of new housing units in the coming years. (You likely have already noticed story poles on Moraga Way and Moraga Road that give an idea of what we can look forward to.) Our property borders the recently approved Camino Ricardo residential development and I have testified at numerous Town meetings over the last 1 1/2 years, describing my concerns about the impacts of this project.

Teresa Onoda, who currently serves on the Towns Planning Commission, was a breath of fresh air during the Public Process. She listened intently to concerns voiced by the community about traffic, grading, wildlife, visual impacts and safety and she pushed hard for changes to the project to address these issues. In large part thanks to her, most of our neighborhood's concerns were addressed in the final plans.

In light of the many proposed/future developments within the Moraga Specific Plan area, we need Town Council members with Teresa's boundless energy and dedication to hold fast to what Moragans care about most: Our semirural environment, our schools, traffic issues, safety and protecting our ridgelines, trails and parks. I have watched Teresa take stands even when she is in the minority. I have no doubt she will use her voice to represent our concerns about the quality of life we are so thankful for in Moraga.

Brita Harris  
Moraga

Editor:

What will Moraga look like in 10 years? Once-graceful ridges bulldozed for building pads? Rolling hills carved up for houses? Traffic jammed from Campolindo to downtown Lafayette? Some of this is already baked in the cake thanks to recent development approvals, but the ultimate answer depends on next month's Moraga Council election.

Three critical issues to be decided by the next Council are ridgeline preservation, revised MOSO guidelines and a General Plan update. Big yawn, right? Wrong! 28 years ago I helped create the Moraga Open Space Ordinance (MOSO). We knew it had limitations, but nowadays many in Moraga think MOSO, the General Plan, and the approval process will protect the Town from destructive development. That's a myth. I've been disheartened by the gradual watering down of MOSO by Council-approved weakening of MOSO Guidelines. And the ridgeline protection elements of the General Plan have proven to be nothing more than words that can be twisted by whomever has the votes. Developers are drooling over our remaining unbuilt ridges and hills. A series of 3-to-2 votes shows that a majority of our current Council is unwilling to reign in the pace, scope and nature of development.

Of the three candidates running for two Council seats, Dave Trotter and Teresa Onoda have strong track records on ridgeline preservation and stricter development controls; Ken Chew does not. During his two terms, Trotter has been an outspoken advocate of tighter controls and has articulated a comprehensive vision of sensible development and preservation of the qualities that have brought most of us to Moraga. Likewise, planning commissioner Onoda has been a strong and enthusiastic champion of maintaining Moraga's look and feel. In contrast, incumbent Ken Chew has drifted away from supporting these issues. For example, he's become ambivalent on ridgeline preservation--this after eight years on the Council and countless discussions. This is not good enough.

Change is inevitable, but it needn't be destructive. We need strong advocates on the Council who will confront tough issues and do the right thing. We need Trotter and Onoda.

Richard Immel  
Moraga

Editor:

Sometimes one has difficulty distinguishing between positions of opposing candidates. This problem does not exist for the Tim Sbranti vs. Catharine Baker race--the candidates have important policy differences.

Catharine Baker, for instance, believes that BART unions should not be able to strike thus halting an essential public service. The no-strike policy exists in New York City where subway workers are not permitted to strike and in San Francisco where Muni workers cannot stop buses and trains. Sbranti, on the other hand, supported the past BART strike and opposes a ban on future BART strikes.

Everyone wants the educational system to improve. Catharine Baker, for instance, supports a recent Los Angeles court decision concerning California public education. This ruling concluded that union-supported rules for dismissal of failing teachers together with layoff rules discriminate against poor and minority students. Sbranti sees no need for change.

Opposing views on BART strikes, teacher work rules, and other issues led both the San Francisco Chronicle and the Contra Costa Times to endorse Baker. Thoughtful voters--conservative, middle-of-the-road, or liberal--should consider supporting Catharine Baker.

David Kruegel  
Moraga

Editor:

I don't know if you endorse candidates, but hope you will join our community leaders in supporting



Kathy Famulener for MOFD Fire Director. She is the one person who understands how to manage in multiple jurisdictions and has experience in multi-agency responses which our lives will depend on in the event of a major fire. Fire doesn't recognize geographic boundaries! Please vote for the candidate who is qualified and doing a great job!

Tom Hammond  
Moraga

Margaret Gee  
Moraga

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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