



Letters to the Editor



... continued

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, semi-rural 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



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