

Letters to the Editor

Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writers and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.
All published letters will include the writer's name and town (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only), and should be 350 words or less. Letters may be edited for length or legal considerations.
email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: **Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570**

Orinda

To the Editor:
As Orinda City Council member the past four years, Victoria Smith has provided leadership and support to Orindans. In 2004, my husband Sarge and I recognized her commitment to the betterment of our community in a caring and fiscally responsible manner. I don't need to repeat her accomplishments -- if you are not already aware of them, you can read about these elsewhere.
What I must stress is that we need the benefit of her ongoing efforts today, and so I most heartily encourage you to join me in voting to return Victoria to the City Council to continue those efforts.
Sue Littlehale
Orinda

Dear Editor,
Victoria Smith gets it! Her vision for Orinda is crystal clear- " safe roads ". She has worked tirelessly to improve the city's roads by being on the Campaign Committee for Measure Q and Co-Chair for Measure E to obtain funds to repave the city's failed roads. The repavement of Moraga Way happened during her watch!
I've known Victoria and her husband, Wick, and her two sons, Will and Daniel, for the last eleven years. I've known her as a leader in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. She has also been a leader in the Parent's Clubs in Sleepy Hollow, Wagner Ranch, OLS and Miramonte. Whether it's as a parent, Planning Commissioner or City Council member, Victoria understands the needs of our families and our community. We need someone in the City Council who understands the needs of our community and can find a consensus to tough problems. Victoria Smith's tenure as a City Council Member has been about bringing diverse groups together to find workable solutions! We have a long way to go to fix our roads and we need to trust people like Victoria Smith to work with different groups and achieve a solution. You can trust Victoria. Vote for Victoria Smith for City Council of Orinda!
Carlos Baltodano
Orinda

Smith and Glazer are Keepers for Orinda City Council
We have had the opportunity to see both Victoria Smith (Orinda mayor) and Steve Glazer (Orinda City Council member and ex-mayor) in action, and we'd like to encourage our fellow Orinda residents to re-elect them for Orinda City Council. After seeing the types of issues that they address, from city-wide projects and improvements to neighborhood planning issues, we realize that they have faced two classic problems: balancing interests that are sometimes conflicting and doing so much with so little. Both Victoria Smith and Steve Glazer have volunteered countless amounts of time and expertise, have done an outstanding job of improving our city, and have handled these tough problems with diplomacy, integrity, and ALWAYS the best interests of our special city, Orinda, in mind and at heart.
Please join us in voting to re-elect Victoria Smith and Steve Glazer for Orinda City Council on November 4th!
Sincerely,
Allison and John Banisard
Orinda

Dear Editor
Orinda residents, please join me in voting to reelect Mayor Victoria Smith to the Orinda City Council.
I had the pleasure of working with Mayor Smith on the bond campaign to fund the repair of roads, drains and water lines in Orinda. I was impressed by her leadership which I was able to observe over many weeks. She demonstrated her concern over the issues raised by opponents to the bond issue and did everything possible to explain the necessity and feasibility of the proposal and to address the concerns of the opponents. Although the bond issue narrowly failed, with Victoria's leadership Moraga Way has been restored, and a sound program for road improvements has been established with citizen participation and oversight. Road improvements are a major part of her agenda. Mayor Smith has demonstrated her desire to be more responsive to citizens, to make city council business more transparent and to encourage citizen involvement in city government.
Mayor Victoria Smith deserves our vote to reelect her to the City Council.
Jack D. Wickware
Orinda

Editors:
What kind of ad is the Follow The Money ?
Somebody paid for it? Let's, as they suggest, FOLLOW THE MONEY.
I am an independent, undecided voter at this time, and I read the letters to the editor seeking information about the candidates. This kind of negative smear does not sit well with me. Why are the accusers willing to pay for what appears to be character assassination. In this country the law says we are entitled to know our accuser(s), to comprehend what we are being accused of, and to defend ourselves. Anyone can make any kind of claim. It may be true, or it may be totally without merit.
To publish what looks like an unsubstantiated smear is to slander the accused . If the charges are true, document them .
And the Lamorinda Weekly should allow the accused opportunity to defend themselves.
Penny Kermit
Orinda

Dear Editor,
As you probably already know, Mayor Victoria Smith is up for re-election. As many people have already stated, she has done an amazing job and I would also like to urge you to vote for her in the upcoming election. It would bring great joy to me to see her in office for another term.
Joe Loudon
Orinda

To the Editor:
Steve Glazer is a candidate for the Orinda City Council in this November's election. In Mr. Glazer's Candidate Statement in the Voter Information Pamphlet he lists his occupation as "Orinda City Council member." Councilmembers receive no salary; so how does Mr. Glazer support his family? The answer is that Mr. Glazer is a paid consultant for developers. Why does Mr. Glazer try to hide this from the voters? Also, why does Mr. Glazer not reveal his education as the other two candidates do? On Mr. Glazer's signs he states "Fresh Ideas and Proven Record." One of the "fresh ideas" seems to be the concealment of the fact that Mr. Glazer is a developer's consultant. Part of his "proven record" seems to be the concealment of his developer connections. With such evasion can we trust Mr. Glazer in other matters?
Barbara Vaughn
Orinda

To the Editor:
Novel and fresh ideas are desperately needed on the Orinda City Council. Dr. Robert (Bob) Larsen, now running for the city council, is Orinda's best hope for needed change. For years, Orinda has been governed by an entrenched group of fiscally reckless city council members. Larsen has promised to end the rancid tax-and-spend atmosphere pervading Orinda.
Larsen would be a dramatic improvement over incumbent city council member Victoria Smith, who is running for re-election.
Grotesque conflicts of interests permeate Smith's campaign. She has received campaign contributions from companies which she is supposed to regulate. According to Form 460, which can be obtained from Orinda's city government, Smith has received significant campaign contributions from AWIN management and from Waste Management, two companies in the rubbish-collection business.
Smith is a member of the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority, the entity which sets Orinda's garbage-collection fees. On March 1, the solid waste authority raised Orinda's garbage-pickup fees by 14.7% (Contra Costa Times, Feb. 1). Smith supported the fee increase, an increase several times the annual rate of inflation.
Are Smith's campaign contributions a reward for her support of the higher fees? Instead of supporting the higher garbage fees, Smith should have opened Orinda's garbage-collection system to honest, competitive bidding.
Smith cannot be trusted to govern wisely. Please vote for Larsen, not for Smith.
Larsen has not taken money from special interests.
Richard S. Colman
Orinda

Editor:
We enthusiastically support Dr. Bob Larsen for City Council for many reasons, not the least of which is the fact that we have known him for twelve years. His intelligence and integrity is above reproach. He is able to solve problems quickly and efficiently while working with people of diverse backgrounds. He is an experienced business owner and an accomplished medical doctor, honored with many professional achievements. Last but certainly not least, his ideas for improving our community are long overdue.
Not only does Dr. Larsen support continued public school excellence and stepping up the repaving of our horrific public roads, but he sees a critical opportunity to improve our Orinda community tax base and retail experience. Have you ever asked yourself why there are so many retail vacancies and such high business turnover here? Why do businesses choose other small towns nearby to locate to? Ask any store owner. They will tell you that Orinda is nearly impossible to deal with. We all end up paying a very high price since we have to personally fund more of our improvements or not fund them at all.
Dr. Larsen advocates a healthy business environment not just for tax revenues but to improve the services and environment for citizens. The City Council needs to offer compelling incentives to attract and keep business here.
The downtown area of Orinda can be refurbished to look more inviting and more attractive. Our city looks like the far flung assortment of storefronts that clearly lack a guiding and planning hand. Residents rarely shop here and our kids have nothing to keep them here. It's a travesty.
The expectations of our elected officials must be much higher. With Dr. Bob Larsen our community will have a stronger voice to carry out a progressive agenda.
Rosarie Hartmeyer, Ph.D. and Bailey Hartmeyer
Orinda

Editor:
The Current Orinda City Council allowed The Wilder (formerly Gateway) Development to erect monstrous Power Towers on our beloved hills, destroying the "semi rural" nature of our community, and formerly pristine views from both public property (eg Orinda BART platform) and private property (many homes, including my own). There was no communication to citizens about this possible change to our Orinda landscape.
Clearly the incumbents do not abide by the definition of Transparency.
Thank goodness we have an option this year: Dr. Bob Larsen - The Alternative.
Sincerely,
Susan Winchester
Orinda

Dear Editor,
We support Victoria Smith for re-election to the Orinda City Council, and feel that we are lucky to have a person of her stature willing to expend the energy and time to represent us. She is a positive force on the council, who researches the subjects before the council and speaks for the well being of the total community. She is intelligent, available to the citizens, and works realistically within our severe budgetary constraints. She has supported the bond measures that sought to improve our roads, drains, and water pipes for fire safety.
Please vote for Victoria Smith for Orinda City Council.
Pat and Bob Dunn
Orinda

Dear Editor:
I support Steve Glazer for City Council because he is open to new ideas and has created many opportunities for citizens to get involved and share their thoughts where it will make a difference. Steve has been a driving force behind the creation of citizen task forces such as the Citizen's Infrastructure Oversight Commission, the Revenue Enhancement Task Force and the Planning Process Review Task Force. These committees are comprised of citizen volunteers who are sharing their expertise and ideas on ways to make Orinda a better City. In the Planning Process Review Task Force, innovative ideas are being surfaced that could streamline home owner improvement project approvals and revitalize our commercial districts. These ideas are being surfaced so the citizens of Orinda can have a real choice in how their City is run. I applaud Steve for working so hard to make Orinda a better place to live and I find it ironic that he is criticized by some for a "lack of transparency" when he has done so much to foster citizen participation in Orinda government.
Rick Booth
22 Year Resident & Orinda Planning Commissioner

Dear Editor:
We want to add our voice to our many neighbors who are supporting Steve Glazer for re-election to the Orinda City Council.
Steve has been an incredible addition to the council. He is accessible, open minded and a good listener. He is a constructive problem solver, as well as a forceful advocate for open government and transparency. His energy and focus have been on basics of city government: public safety, road repairs, planning matters and fiscal accountability.
We also appreciate that he stepped in and helped make the Safeway remodel happen. We are disappointed to see Bob Larsen's smear campaign against Mr. Glazer. However, we remain confident that our Orinda neighbors will look at the issues, recognize the hollowess of Mr. Larsen's charges, and join us in supporting our energetic and sensible Councilmember Steve Glazer.
Carol and Steve Whittaker
Orinda

Moraga

Dear Editor:
Those of us who treasure the small town tranquility of Moraga are deeply disturbed by the nasty political attacks against Karen Mendonca's candidacy for Moraga Town Council. Some of these attacks have turned particularly virulent, as a group of covert activists have played what many see as the "the race card" against Karen's candidacy. Deception, misrepresentation, and offensive innuendo have no place in civil discourse. Here's the situation and what we need to do about it:
1. Unlike other candidates, Karen Mendonca's road side posters have repeatedly been vandalized or stolen from public right of ways and private property where permission has been granted by the owner. This malicious behavior occurs in the dead of night and requires a continuous effort on the part of the Mendonca campaign to replace and repair signs. This is especially problematic because Karen is the only candidate that has not been allowed by the Bruzzone to post signs on their land, so the area in which she can post signs is quite restricted in comparison to her competitors.
2. Unlike other candidates, Karen Mendonca has been the target of false emails about her candidacy, with misrepresentations regarding campaign contributions, expenses and relationships. These misrepresentations are a disservice to our community and an insult to our intelligence. Reports of campaign expenses, as well as the amount and source of campaign contributions, are matters of public record.
3. Finally, and most egregious, is the recent surfacing of what many see as hate mail from a group calling itself "Moragans for Government Integrity". At its website and in emails, it has concocted a subtly racist attack on the local Asian community, because some members of that community support Karen's views and endorse her campaign. Building a common vision for Moraga and future generations requires a commitment to civility, mutual respect, truth and thoughtful analysis. No matter who you vote for in the coming election, we must realize that we cannot build a future based on integrity and trust if we foul the community with fear and loathing.
Barbara Ochota
Moraga

Dear Editor,
Though time has taken its toll on the political signs around town, I found it interesting to observe two weeks ago that of all the signage lining Moraga Way upon entering Moraga, the only signs not standing proudly were the three urging Yes on Proposition 8. Their remnants lay in the grass and roadside rocks, torn and pulled from their support rods. A random act of vandalism? If so, why only these signs, and why on both sides of the street?
Whether you favor or oppose a candidate or proposition, denying the opposing group the equal opportunity to advertise its position is a characteristic of a fascist state (i.e., if you don't support my views you have no say!) Not allowing the democratic process to work its way does nothing to gain support for those who want equality under the law. Let the evidence at the end of the election day indicate the true community support of your candidate or position, giving all voices a chance to be heard.
Rick Dinkle
Moraga

Dear Editor,
On October 13, the Moraga Room at the Soda Center at St. Mary's College, was full of attentive, interested voters, gathered for the Initiative Forum that was sponsored by Moraga Citizens Network. As sponsors, we want to thank the College for making this room available for a very important town event. As coordinator of the Forum, I experienced excellent cooperation and professional support from every college employee and student with whom I worked. This was truly a piece of our dream where the town and the college came together to collaborate. I hope we citizens will continue to be alert to finding other ways for mutual town and college exchanges, support, cooperation.
Thank you, St. Mary's College, for giving Moraga residents a large enough space for everyone to sit down to learn about the land use initiatives.
Ellen Beans
President, Moraga Citizens Network

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Public Forum

JOIN IT

Halloween Comes Early to Moraga
Halloween is traditionally a time for children, enjoying treats or being the target of tricks. But this year is different -- it is Moraga's adult resident voters who are the target of tricks--political tricks the likes of which Moraga has never seen before.
Immense amounts of money have been spent by developer, Bruzzone Inc., trying to defeat Measure K through chaos, confusion and intimidation of the voter. This developer has spent an astonishing \$500,000 so far--more than \$100 per voting household. His campaign no longer promotes his own Measure J, but now concentrates on attacking and distorting the citizen-sponsored Measure K. You can see the results of these huge expenditures in your postal and email mailboxes and on your TV sets.
Bruzzone Inc.'s attack mailers are scarier than a haunted house, but they are not truthful.
For example, the latest Bruzzone gem implying that the Moraga-Orinda Fire District opposes Measure K has been unequivocally repudiated by MOFD Fire Chief Pete Nowicki.
And if creating confusion and distorting the truth do not work and Measure K passes, Bruzzone Inc. threatens to sue the Town. Does this sound like someone protecting your interests - someone whose counsel, advice and guidance you should follow?
Developers' lawsuit threats are not new to Moraga. Northwood Homes made the same threat twenty-two years ago when Moraga citizens campaigned for the Town's first open space protection measure, the Moraga Open Space Ordinance (MOSO 1986). It is important to note here that MOSO 1986--an ordinance now praised by Measure K's opponents--was not a product of the Moraga Planning Process. It was an initiative, created by residents, placed on the ballot through the collection of signatures, and approved by the voters.

After MOSO 1986 passed, the developer did sue, and the Town defended that initiative in court and won. That lawsuit, and its judgment in favor of the Town, has become a landmark case in land use law. Most long-time Moragans feel that passing the MOSO Initiative in 1986 and subsequently defending the will of the voters in court was the right thing to do.
If Measure K fails, the Town will be forced to process the major subdivisions planned for Bollinger Canyon, Indian Valley and Rheem Ridge. Is the Town protected from lawsuits then? Absolutely not!
As evidenced by the Palos Colorados project, contentious developments spawn lawsuits of their own, and legal challenges would likely be filed against each of these new subdivision projects individually. Moraga was sued twice over Palos Colorados, by both the developer and by Lafayette, and had to pay its own legal expenses. And Orinda and Lafayette have made clear that they stand ready to challenge any development project generating significant additional traffic from Moraga.
Just how strong is the legal basis for a challenge to Measure K? The Town Attorney examined the eight most important legal issues regarding the initiative. On every issue, the Town Attorney's analysis (in the "9212 Report") showed the significant difficulty such a challenge would face. This Town Attorney has served Moraga for over 20 years, successfully defended MOSO 1986 on behalf of the voters of Moraga, and is recognized as one of the most experienced and respected land use attorneys in the Bay Area.
But if you don't trust the Town Attorney, consider the fact that Alameda County voters passed an open space measure very much like Measure K in 2000, which was upheld all the way to the California Supreme Court where it became a statewide precedent. Four years later, Hercules voters passed a similar measure which was also upheld. Fre-

mont and Livermore voters passed their own similar open space initiatives which were never challenged--those developers figured out that to do so would be a waste of money.
The bottom line is that Measure K has a strong and tested legal foundation. If Measure K must be defended, the Town will be defending the right of its residents to establish land use regulations under state and federal law.
Measure K will protect the quality of life in Moraga. It's easy to take for granted, but we should all ask ourselves just what contributes to that quality of life and what first attracted us to Moraga?
Surely, the semi-rural character and stunning beauty of our surroundings enhances our lives with a feeling of peace as we rush through our busy days. Are developments with huge estate houses lining the ridges and covering the hillsides consistent with your concept of semi-rural?
We are all familiar with the traffic problems in and out of Moraga, especially the torturous commute traffic. Is there any way our lives won't be impacted by the several thousand additional vehicle trips generated daily by the proposed developments?
And what about the value of our homes, probably the single most important component of our quality of life? As everyone knows, home value is a function of desirability of location. How will the desirability of Moraga - the quality of life it offers - be impacted by building in scenic view areas and on ridgelines, and by adding yet more traffic?
This Halloween, don't fall for the developer's tricks. Protect your quality of life and property values, and vote Yes on Measure K.
Frank Comprelli
Moraga