

Editorial: Three picks for Laguna Woods council

Newcomer Hatch would complement incumbents Conners, Robbins.

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER *Published: Oct. 23, 2012 Updated: Oct. 24, 2012 9:53 a.m.*



Conners Robbins Hatch

Of all the city council races in all of Orange County, none features a more congenial slate of candidates than does Laguna Woods, the community of a little more than 16,000 residents, with a median age of 78.

Six candidates are vying for three available council seats: incumbents Cynthia Conners and Milton Robbins and challengers Noel Hatch, Mary Hodgkins, Shari Horne and David Russell Ohrn.

The Register's Editorial Board endorses Ms. Conners, Mr. Robbins and Mr. Hatch.

We were struck by the fact that every one of the Laguna Woods council candidates agreed that their city is well-run, and that the current council members have been good stewards of the city's \$6.5 million annual budget.

That seems a persuasive reason for voters to return both Ms. Conners and Mr. Robbins to the Council for another four years.

The former actually was appointed to the council in 2009 to fill the seat left vacant by Brenda Ross, who died at 93, shortly after her election. A still-practicing attorney, Ms. Conners so impressed her fellow council members that they made her Laguna Woods mayor last year.

Prior to joining the council, Ms. Conners was president of Third Mutual Laguna Woods Village, a 9,000 - member homeowners association with an annual budget larger than that of the city government.

Her three main priorities: Improving accessibility within the retirement community, by adding golf cart paths; ramping up recycling of city waste to increase its diversion rate; and promoting water and energy conservation.

Of all the city council races in all of Orange County, none features a more congenial slate of candidates than does Laguna Woods, the community of a little more than 16,000 residents, with a median age of 78.

Six candidates are vying for three available council seats: incumbents Cynthia Conners and Milton Robbins and challengers Noel Hatch, Mary Hodgkins, Shari Horne and David Russell Ohrn.

The Register's Editorial Board endorses Ms. Conners, Mr. Robbins and Mr. Hatch.

We were struck by the fact that every one of the Laguna Woods council candidates agreed that their city is well-run, and that the current council members have been good stewards of the city's \$6.5 million annual budget.

That seems a persuasive reason for voters to return both Ms. Conners and Mr. Robbins to the Council for another four years.

The former actually was appointed to the council in 2009 to fill the seat left vacant by Brenda Ross, who died at 93, shortly after her election. A still-practicing attorney, Ms. Conners so impressed her fellow council members that they made her Laguna Woods mayor last year.

Prior to joining the council, Ms. Conners was president of Third Mutual Laguna Woods Village, a 9,000 - member homeowners association with an annual budget larger than that of the city government.

Her three main priorities: Improving accessibility within the retirement community, by adding golf cart paths; ramping up recycling of city waste to increase its diversion rate; and promoting water and energy conservation.

Mr. Robbins, a retired accountant, has lived in Laguna Woods for 20 of his 92 years. Like Ms. Conners, he wants to "make it easier so residents can move around" the community using golf carts.

He also wants the Council to examine ways it can help residents (some of whom are on fixed incomes) with their energy costs, and to maintain the city government's transparency, for which it was rated "excellent" in a county grand jury report this past summer on compensation cost transparency for all 34 O.C. cities.

We found it difficult to choose among the four nonincumbents, each of whom would fit right in on Laguna Woods' very collegial Council. But, on balance, we believe Mr. Hatch would bring the most to the Council.

Boasting more than 35 years experience with a Los Angeles law firm, Mr. Hatch also has served as a member of the city's Land Use and Design Review Committee, and, like Mayor Conners, served as president of Third Mutual Laguna Woods Village.

He said he wants the city to be less reliant on grant money to fund programs, to support local business and to be a voice of Laguna Woods residents "in greater Orange County."