

Mayor Brian Dombkowski Recognized Town Manager Kevin Bryant
at his Retirement Party on May 9, 2025

Good evening, everyone!

Thank you all for being here to celebrate Kevin's retirement, certainly a major milestone in anyone's life - and of course an important moment of reflection for all of us to honor his calm and steady leadership and his commitment to the Town of Woodside for 17 years. While I didn't witness those early years, I've had the privilege of working alongside Kevin for the second half of his tenure as our Town Manager. And I'm especially honored to have the gavel in hand this evening to reflect on his impact and lasting legacy on the Town of Woodside.

Trying to capture the entirety of his contributions in a couple of minutes is of course an impossibility, particularly because so much of his job happens in the 'unglamorous space' in between the headlines. But as I thought about my own relationship and experience with Kevin, I wanted to share a few stories and observations with you that I hope to capture his integrity, his humility and his magnanimous leadership style – qualities that have deeply shaped who we are as a community.

My first memorable interaction with Kevin happened when I first joined the council. It's not uncommon for self-identified "change agents" to show up thinking they're going to get things done with optimal efficiency. And Kevin has had to gently guide all 18 council members who served during his time into understanding what local government really is – and what it really needs.

I have the distinct recollection of Kevin conducting that first orientation, as he patiently explained that "in government we want to get to the right outcome - but the only way that outcome has validity is if there is process – a robust and transparent process, where every voice is heard and considered – because without that, without the consent of the stakeholders, you have nothing."

That idea—seemingly simple—has become a guiding truth for Woodside. And it doesn't happen by accident. It happens because of the integrity and honesty and forthright approach that Kevin brought to his role. Culture starts at the top as the saying goes - and leadership matters. His commitment to doing right, to being measured in our approach, and to engaging with everyone involved, is a hallmark of how he wanted local government to function in our small, tight-knit community – and that philosophy is deeply engrained as a part of our DNA as a Town because of him - and that is certainly a legacy that is worth celebrating.

It is one of life's truths that you can only connect the dots and understand how your life came together – or why you were the perfect fit for the perfect time - looking backwards from where you are today. Kevin grew up in a small town in Maine - and Woodside, with its own sense of independence, self-reliance and its very strong sense of community, felt like home.

He joined Woodside as our assistant town manager, a role he held prior in Sausalito, after leadership roles in both Tiburon and Alameda. When Susan George retired, he was chosen from a pool of 94 candidates, a feat onto its own, according to an Almanac article at the time - and clearly, they made the right call.

Under Kevin's leadership, Woodside evolved. He guided us through major changes – including the operating uncertainty of the pandemic, the state mandated housing elements, and so many complicated public hearings that tested the collective patience and diplomacy of all parties involved. He stayed calm and balanced through it all, leading by example and setting the tone for public discourse in Woodside.

He built a strong, long-tenured team, and hired key successors. He led us through redistricting, district elections and the transition to a 5-person council and planning commission. He helped streamline our town code and upgrade our infrastructure—from Safe Routes to School to EV chargers and solar panels to bridge repairs, library renovations, license plate readers, and importantly, the creation of a zoom room virtual environment that increased the accessibility and participation in our local government immeasurably.

He built strong connections for the town across the political landscape and did so while never becoming political himself – to this day I have no idea what his political leanings are - and in doing so, in the polarizing world around us, he made us, as a community, more united, grounded and focused on what matters most.

And he did it all on a shoestring budget, and in a world where deficit spending in government is commonplace. Today, he leaves us on strong financial footing, with a positively funded pension plan and without any municipal debt. That's an extraordinary accomplishment particularly in the times we live in.

He did all of these things and so much more – and he did it with a sense of joy, even a light-heartedness if you caught him at the right moment - and he always seemed to find a silver lining in the midst of some very challenging moments as well as a shared excitement or at least a quiet pride during some of the incredible successes for the Town over the years.

Which brings me to my final story - my so-called “last” interaction with him – and it has to do with these remarks. This story is about how challenging it felt to get him to help in

preparing these remarks. I must have asked Kevin a half dozen times to provide me with a list of his proudest accomplishments. He would always commit to doing so...but actually getting him to provide a list was like pulling teeth. You might think he was being difficult, and if you didn't know him very well, you might come to that exact conclusion. But for everyone in this room who has had the honor of working closely with Kevin, you know that his avoidance in responding is actually something very different. You know that you couldn't ask Kevin a more uncomfortable question than that – or a question he would less like to answer. His personality and his approach to his work just doesn't allow him to naturally want to provide that list.

Kevin is uniquely humble. He is about giving credit to others. He has led strongly when necessary but also by quiet example. He empowers others. He celebrates the success of others over himself. And that's why I find this last interaction with Kevin so profound as it relates to who Kevin is and how he approached his work in his time here. His character represents a part of our character here in Woodside – the aspirational piece of our personality as a community. And we will miss his humility and his magnanimous approach to leadership greatly.

But that said Kevin, you can and should leave Woodside really proud of where we are and what you have accomplished, having navigated complexities that couldn't have been imagined when you joined the Town.

To Junko, and to your children: thank you for sharing him with us. We know this work takes time, energy, patience—and often the sacrifice of family dinners and time together. Woodside is deeply grateful to you for allowing – your husband – and your dad - to contribute so fully to this community.

Kevin, thank you for your service, for dedicating 17 years of your life to our community, and for leading with integrity and honesty – which is incredibly important in this position, and you did it really well. You worked hard to serve our mission and to move the Town forward. And your legacy and leadership will continue to inspire us all in our work as we move forward from here.

So, thank you for your amazing contributions to our success...and congratulations on your well-deserved retirement.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in a warm round of applause in gratitude for the one and only, Kevin Bryant.

The council has a small token of our appreciation for you this evening. We will formally read your proclamation recognizing your exemplary service into the record next Tuesday night, but tonight, the Council, past and present, would like to share our gratitude for your service with this original Vicki Coe painting – “Sunrise on Whiskey Hill” – painted from the vantage point of the Horse Park, looking off into the distant western hills. The colors captured at daybreak are exceptional – and the painting is both hopeful about the future and what is to come, but also in a way, wistful and reflective, which we hope will capture the nostalgia of Woodside and your retirement. May it remind you of this chapter of your life, and this town, whenever you look at it.