



The Light endorses Dominic Grossi for supervisor

By Tess Elliott
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The Point Reyes Light endorses Dominic Grossi for District 4 supervisor. Fair-minded, frank and capable of compromise, Dominic is our best chance for a diverse and dynamic West Marin that will be resilient in the face of changes.

Dominic set himself apart from his opponent, Dennis Rodoni, with whom he shares many positions, by consistently speaking in concrete terms and giving specific examples of problems and possible solutions. He captured my support with the hard work he did since the June primary, a listening campaign that resulted in a grasp of the concerns of his future constituents. He gets that working-class people struggle to find and maintain housing, that agriculture on the coast is threatened and needs proactive support, that villages' infrastructure is buckling under a tourist surge. He is passionate about protecting local businesses, tackling homeless services and improving safety on rural roads.

I believe Dominic will be more independent of advocacy groups than his opponent, leading to greater fairness in decision-making and transparency in process.

Importantly, Dominic spent many hundreds of hours over the last decade working on the update to the Local Coastal Program. Through his role as president of the Marin County Farm Bureau, he collaborated with county planners and environmental leaders to hone regulations aimed at protecting natural resources, agriculture and public access as sea levels rise, biodiversity shrinks and populations grow.

Those who watched him during the Local Coastal Program update said Dominic stood out in his ability to listen openly to opposing arguments, evaluate the facts and adjust his position as needed. He accepted the give and take of a cooperative public process. One of these people called him "tough but fair," summing up his willingness to compromise as, "It's not what I wanted, but I can live with it."

I like that Dominic has such a thorough education in West Marin's most important planning and policy document.

Dominic won the endorsement of our last two longtime supervisors, Steve Kinsey and Gary Giacomini; Wendi Kallins, who finished a strong third in the primary election; and many current elected officials—the vast majority of them Democrats. Let's remember that the position of county supervisor is nonpartisan. I urge Dominic to support expanded social services, a Democratic value, in his new role.

There is no question that Dennis has done good work in West Marin, from helping the Coastal Health Alliance expand and renovate to securing federal funding for infrastructure improvements for North Marin Water District, among other worthy efforts. He speaks resonantly about our aging population and its needs, and knows local people and groups by name.

Yet I have persistent concerns based on his past positions and statements: that he will not be an earnest supporter of agriculture, that his decisions could further burden small food producers and other businesses already struggling under a plethora of regulations, that he will shy away from shoring up workforce housing by limiting short-term vacation rentals. That he is too cozy with those environmental groups that use exaggeration and legal action to bully citizens and the county.

It is not enough to be from West Marin or to have a familiar name or face; our supervisor needs to have a difficult set of skills and instincts. In Dominic, what you see is what you get. He speaks his mind and he does not balk at conflict or confrontation. Though he did make me cringe at the recent Dance Palace debate when he confronted Dennis about certain things he alleged Dennis had said to some people, at least he was upfront about what he feels.

This race, with its high stakes and aggressive campaigning, has become downright uncomfortable. It is painful to disagree with neighbors over candidates that in many cases are friends. But the person we elect will help make decisions that will shape West Marin for many decades to come. Agriculture is a key point here.

As a rancher in Marin, Dominic is a daily steward of the environment, abiding by stringent environmental protections and best management practices. Like many ranchers, he knows the ins and outs of those protections better than almost anyone. He has a lived sense of the balance of local food production—for which Marin has a large and growing demand—and the protection of natural resources.

I am concerned that Dennis would tilt that balance toward the reduction of local food production, a loss we cannot abide. Local agriculture and aquaculture operations need to be aided, not further shackled. The near-term survival of this part of our county's economy is less than certain.

If Dennis is elected, I hope he makes a renewed effort to fight against the pernicious forces of gentrification that hollow out our more diverse economy.

And if Dominic is elected, I hope he takes to heart that West Marin cares deeply about its farmworkers. I think he got that message after his unclear position on the state bill that now gives those workers fair overtime pay. I urge him to fight equally for agriculturalists and the workers they depend on.

Both candidates spoke to an important point at last week's debate: the need for coastal communities to advocate at the county level for what they want. It's been on my mind lately, as I see involvement in our towns' village associations and service districts shrinking. Few young people attend these meetings or volunteer on these boards, which tend to be dominated by just a few voices.

If we want to talk about the fabric of West Marin—the resilient community spirit that is responsive to change while honoring history and culture—our village groups are the looms on which we weave that fabric. We need to get out of our homes and attend our town meetings, listen to one another, brainstorm solutions and generate unified messages to take to the county. If these looms break down, the fabric of this place, a place we all love, will soon wear thin.