

## John Heading

### Mayoral Candidate (Incumbent)

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### Candidate Introduction and Statement

My name is Dr. John Heading and I am currently the Mayor of Morro Bay. My career involves the management of complex organizations. I have been a department director in hospitals and was the CEO/COO of multiple hospitals for almost 20 years. My background includes having earned a Master's degree in Healthcare Administration, a Doctor of Pharmacy degree, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy. I successfully have operated small businesses (retail pharmacies) in both Cambria and Morro Bay. I recently retired and continue to serve full-time as Morro Bay's Mayor. My wife, Sue, is a registered nurse and we have lived on the central coast for over 15 years. My daughter, Sarah, and son-in-law, Matthew, live in Morro Bay as do our two grandchildren, Stewart (LOMS student) and Hannah (Morro Bay high school student).

I am running for a second term as Mayor to preserve the unique small harbor town nature of Morro Bay while embracing change that improves our economic and financial position. Under my leadership, the City Council has established new policies, resulting in significant increases in our financial reserves, that allow us to continue to provide core public safety services despite the devastating loss of revenues due to COVID-19. I will continue to advocate for sound fiscal policies, diversification of our economic revenue base, transparency in government, protection of our bay and Harbor, and expansion of our Tourism (post Covid-19) and Fishing industries. I promise to continue to work hard to eliminate wasteful spending, further reduce our pension liabilities, support local businesses with business-friendly policy development, and complete our new water treatment facility. Finally, I will continue to support local police and fire services to protect our public safety.

**Question: Do you think our four economic centers (Downtown, Waterfront, Quintana and North Morro Bay) are healthy and successful? If not, what three things are needed to improve business conditions in the city?**

No, I do not think our business districts are as healthy and successful as they could be. Certainly, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been significant and contributed to a decline in business viability. SLOCAL, our regional tourism marketing entity recently completed a survey of individuals visiting San Luis Obispo County. The results indicated that Morro Bay was one of the top three destinations in the county, but unfortunately was one of the cities that suffered from low consumer spending during their visit to the city. The problem was short stays, and lower dollar spending by visitors. I believe the following three improvement opportunities exist for all districts: 1) create a city wide culture of customer service excellence and provide superior products that attract individuals who will spend more during their visit and stay longer in Morro Bay. 2) develop the catalyst sites that have



been identified in our economic plan which could significantly contribute to the provision of new products and services, and the improvement of the “look” of businesses in each business district. 3) as a city, improve all business service processes to allow for more rapid and meaningful change. Examples include improving the city’s planning/permitting processes, creating a city culture that is business friendly, and effectively marketing this city as being open to new business development.

**Question: If you received a \$1 Million dollar grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?**

Because of the dramatic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cities revenues, the city has had to dip into its reserves in order to continue to provide essential services. It would be my fiduciary responsibility to utilize the million dollars to replenish the reserves that had to be used for COVID-19. This would not be a time to initiate any new programs or projects, but to preserve the core financial status of the city.

**Question: In seeking your position as an elected decision and policy maker in this 2020 election, what do you think are your shortcomings or lack of expertise and how do you intend to deal with them?**

Having worked all of my career in the private sector, I have learned to operate in a business environment that allowed for quick decision making, nimble responses to issues, and proactive management. Working in the public sector, government, involves decision making that requires much more “processing” to move initiatives forward. I think my biggest shortcoming at times is “my own frustration” with how long it takes to make and implement decisions. However, I have grown to appreciate the public process and the need for public vetting even as this can be frustrating because change takes place so slowly.

**Please describe your business experience.**

My business experience is extensive. I have been in healthcare management for over 45 years and my career involved the management of complex organizations as well as operating my own small businesses. My education includes a Doctor of Pharmacy degree, Master’s degree in Healthcare Administration, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy. I have been in hospital management starting, as a department director and then was a CEO/COO of multiple hospitals for almost 15 years. I was responsible for managing budgets exceeding \$150 million in organizations where I was responsible for over 2000 employees. When I moved to the Central Coast I owned and operated two successful independent pharmacies with revenues that exceeded \$6 million per year. I successfully sold both businesses and retired to work full-time for the city of Morro Bay. Lastly, my experience on the City Council and as Mayor of Morro Bay further contributed to my management experience in the public sector. Having been a city Council member for four years and Mayor for two years, I have also gained significant experience in working on regional initiatives across San Luis Obispo County. These



opportunities have allowed me to build strong relationships with many individuals in government throughout the county.

