



Mayor Gives State of the City Address

By Cathy Tyson



Orinda Mayor Victoria Smith at the Orinda Library Photo Cathy Tyson

“Our biggest challenge is roads. As you probably all know, the bad news is we have 95 miles of the worst roads in the entire bay area. We have sunk below the city of Richmond. We are dead last. As you probably also know it will cost \$100 million dollars to rebuild them,” said Mayor Victoria Smith in her State of the City address.

To an overflowing crowd, Smith outlined what was happening in all the City departments and gave an overview of the budget. The straightforward speech was enhanced with a media presentation that included themed music for the various sections. Right off the bat was a crowd pleaser from the Rolling Stones, “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” to kick off the first section, discussion of the road situation.

After graciously welcoming everyone and thanking all who contributed to the event, Mayor Smith singled out Monica Pacheco with a special acknowledgement for her technical assistance in putting together the visual aids and the music.

Continuing on with the road theme she spoke of the Citizens In-

frastructure Oversight Committee. “Their task is to make sure with the limited road dollars that we do have, around a million dollars a year...to make sure we are spending it on the right priorities. They will bring their recommendations to us in the next couple of months and we look forward to that.” Seeking state funding and looking at various alternatives, like benefit assessment districts are options they are actively pursuing.

On a more positive note, the good news is the Moraga Way paving project has been moved up so as not to conflict with the EBMUD plan to replace pipes along Moraga Road through Lafayette during the summer months. The \$2.8 million dollar repair, offset by a substantial grant of \$1.3 million from the state will be big improvement for drivers.

Following that came the aptly titled, “What does the City do for you and how does it do it?” Here she talked about the City’s operating budget, about \$10.8 million dollars, over 50% of which comes from property and sales taxes. It may surprise some residents to know that for every dollar in property tax paid, Orinda only gets seven cents of tax revenue.

Next on the municipal finance theme was expenses. A substantial portion of the revenue pie is spent, almost one third, for police services. After everyone got a chuckle from the song, “I Fought The Law And The Law Won,” Smith summarized the department; “We contract with Contra Costa Sheriff’s Department for our police services. We have 14 sworn officers, so we always have at least two on duty at all times. We have a very safe city.” She was pleased to report a 48% decrease in auto related crimes, which she attributes to good policing.

The Capital Improvement Budget for 2007 – 2008 of \$3.8 million will be spent on infrastructure projects; for example the Moraga Way project, the annual pavement management budget, fixing the Manzanita and Miner Road bridges, and repairing storm drains.

Parks and Recreation followed with some truly impressive numbers. “We really have a cradle to grave program here. We have things for toddlers, we have things for seniors. We offer more than 400 classes each session of the year; each of these sessions has more than 3,000 participants. They really do a terrific job for our community,” proudly reported Smith.

Planning, Public Works, Engineering, and Administration were outlined towards the end of the speech along with updates on the Wilder and Pulte developments.