

Beverli Marshall—Keeping Track of Orinda’s Money and Much More

By Andrea A. Firth



Beverli Marshall, Administrative/Financial Services Director for the City of Orinda
Photo by Andrea A. Firth

As the Administrative/Financial Services Director in Orinda, Beverli Marshall has a long title and a long list of responsibilities to go with it. To start, Marshall oversees the city budget and all things accounting related which includes accounts payable and receivable, payroll, and investments. To be sure, she has spent countless hours over the past few months working to finalize the city’s budget for next fiscal year. This has required coordinating the needs and requests of the City Council and the new committees, commissions, and task forces that have been formed to help Orinda find financial solutions to their infrastructure woes.

But wait, there’s more. Human resources, risk management, information and telecommunication systems, and general services are all part of Marshall’s domain as well. Although she may not have to do everything herself, she does have to be sure it all gets done. “We contract out a lot to keep our agency size static,” explains Marshall. “But the services still have to be delivered. It is a big job to manage.”

A product of the state higher-education system, Marshall attended California State University Bakersfield and went on to obtain a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Alaska. Marshall moved to Anchorage seeking an experience different from her southern California roots. “It took three years to overcome the shock of the Alaskan winter on my system,” recalls Marshall. “And I’m not sure that I ever really got used to the cold, and I still don’t eat fish,” she adds with a laugh.

Marshall came to Orinda about a year ago from a similar post at the Berkeley Public Library. She also held other positions in Berkeley’s city government. Having come from Berkeley, she is accustomed to “being under the microscope.” She is comfortable with public scrutiny

and feels community input provides an essential barometer for city government to know what is and is not working.

Although Marshall feels Orindans have high expectations for the level of city services, she finds their approach to city government refreshing. “People in Orinda take a balanced approach to how much government needs to be involved. There is a healthy barrier—and it’s a fine line—between community involvement and handing it over for the work to be done,” she explains.

With the move from a larger, urban setting such as Berkeley to a smaller, semi-rural city like Orinda, Marshall has found that she prefers being a bigger fish in a smaller pond. “[In Orinda] I can really see the impact of what I’m doing. I like the immediate feedback,” she states.

“Orinda is a new kid. It’s really just reaching teenager status as far as cities go,” explains Marshall. “It hasn’t grown in size, but it’s starting to formalize things.” These structured processes are essential to good business practice according to Marshall. “You need to have systems in place to make sure things are being taken care of. You need a checklist.”

Marshall would like to see Orinda’s designation as the city with the best schools and worst roads change. “Fixing the roads is Orinda’s biggest challenge,” states Marshall. “It will take community involvement and support and really looking at the problem from different perspectives,” she adds. “We have to find more revenue.”