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Orinda City Council Sets Strategy-Prudent Fiscal Management the Priority

By Andrea A. Firth

In a relaxed, collegial, workshop format, Orinda's City Council met with several members of the City Staff to establish goals and objectives for the year. All agreed that infrastructure remained the City's number one problem. However, the Council set clear direction that its number one, overarching priority is prudent fiscal management. As the Council and Staff reviewed the City's plans related to infrastructure, public safety, planning and economic development, and customer service and community outreach, the discussion often returned to the need to implement programs as cost effectively as possible.

"Can we be more efficient? Are we doing our best?" were questions raised by Council Member Tom McCormick. He suggested that the City conduct an internal review of all departments and programs to look for efficiencies and ways to save money. Mayor Sue Severson agreed that an internal review was appropriate noting that the City had already set the plans for enhancing revenue in motion through the implementation of the recommendations offered by the Revenue Enhancement Task Force.

City Manager Janet Keeter reported that the City had no cuts planned and was working to "hold the line" on the City budget. Keeter and Administrative/Financial Services Director Beverli Marshall also reported that input from members of the Finance Advisory Committee, formerly the Budget Committee, had been very helpful in last year's budget process and would be part of the process again this year. "We really celebrate the work of the Budget Committee," stated Council Member Amy Worth.

Improving public communication was another important priority identified by the Council Members. As an example, Worth pointed to the significant amount of work done by the Planning Process Review Task Force and the need to bring the group's recommendations to the community in a big way. Although the Council liked the look of the City's new website, members were frustrated by its less than user-friendly access to information. "Three and four clicks to find something is too many," stated McCormick. In addition, McCormick repeatedly called for the City to establish and grow effective email distribution lists for communicating to residents.

The City Council and Staff will continue the Strategic Planning Workshop on Tuesday, March 10 at 9:30am in the Community Room at City Hall.

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