

# City Council and Planning Commission Review the Year's Work

By Andrea A. Firth

When Orinda's City Council, Planning Commission, and Planning Department met jointly on March 9th, the feeling among the five elected officials, the seven appointed city volunteers, and six staff members seated around the large rectangular table was very collegial. Although business was down—the Planning Commission acted on only 37 projects in 2009 as compared to 61 projects in 2008—business was getting done better and faster.

"Smooth sailing" was the term Vice Mayor Victoria Smith used to describe the work of the City's Planning Department over the past year. "We are doing things right and more quickly," stated Smith. According to Orinda's Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu, the median time between submitting an application for a building permit to receiving a decision shortened from over 100 days in 2008 to 83 days in 2009. Smith was also im-

pressed that since November of 2008 only two projects had been appealed to the City Council.

Several Planning commissioners commented positively on the impact of the Conceptual Development Review that has been implemented by the Planning Department. Prior to formally submitting for a building permit, applicants are encouraged to submit conceptual designs for review. The concept designs are reviewed in-house, a Planning Department staff member visits the site, and feedback to facilitate the application process is typically provided to the applicant within a few days. Applicants are charged a \$115 fee, which is applied to the formal permit application fee if filed within 90 days. "The conceptual design review provides a giant payoff for both the City and applicant," stated Planning Commissioner Chris Kniel. "The City has to be very pleased with the wonderful work done

by our Planning Department," added Planning Commissioner Carlos Baltodano. "The staff goes out and looks at the site. They show a lot of integrity in their work and are very professional. You don't hear horror stories about our staff."

Ursu also reported on the status of the Planning Process Review Task Force (PPRTF) Recommendations. The City Council has completed its review of the Process and Residential sections of the PPRTF report and changes to the code, to implement the recommendations, will be in effect in May of this year. The Planning Commission has started to review the PPRTF's recommendations regarding downtown land use and development and will continue its review at regular meetings over the next three months. The Planning Commission next meets on Tuesday, March 23rd at 7:00 p.m. in the Library Auditorium.

# Orinda's New Police Chief—Jeff Jennings

By Andrea A. Firth



Orinda's new Police Chief Jeff Jennings.

Photo provided

the Day in the Office of Emergency Services for four years, and working as a Patrol Sergeant for the City of Danville and for the County.

Jennings says his ideas for community policing align closely with those of Chief French and that the issue of underage alcohol use will continue to be a high priority for the Orinda police. "Along with continued enforcement, my focus is to build partnerships with parents, teachers, and educators," says Jennings.

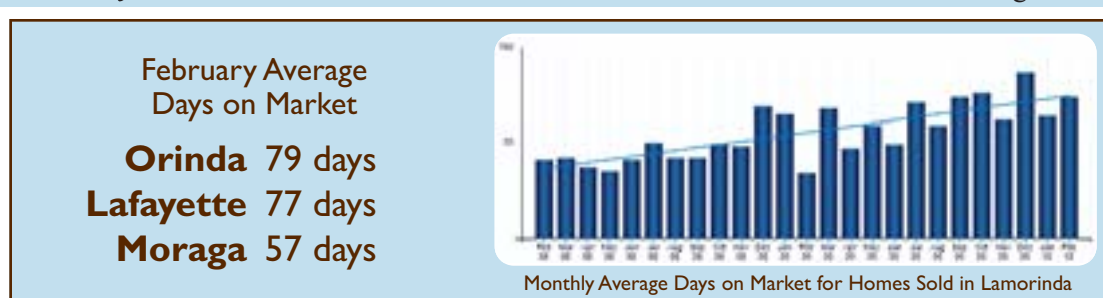
Raised in Fairfield, Jennings graduated from San Francisco State University with a degree in psychology. He has coached youth sports for many years and has dealt with hundreds of kids from third grade through high-school age along the way. He is married and has three daughters ranging in age from grammar school to college.

The hiring process involved a Community Panel, Professional/Technical Panel, a written exercise, and one-on-one interviews with the City Manager.

Lieutenant Jeff Jennings from the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office has been hired as the City of Orinda's new Police Chief upon the retirement of current Chief Bill French. Jennings' first day is tentatively Monday, March 22nd.

Jennings has been with the

Sheriff's Office for 18 years and currently serves as the Director of the Communications Center running the operations of the largest dispatch service in the county. He has held several posts with the Sheriff's Office, which include working in the Martinez Detention Facility, serving as the Officer of



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live better live lean  
**body makeovers**  
 by Sheena

*I am stronger than I can ever remember...*  
 I have been very athletic all my life but also struggled to keep my weight in check. A 'perfect storm' of happenings – becoming home-based for work and a milestone birthday – both aided in a pretty significant drop in my metabolism. I just could not eat any less than I already was so I knew it meant the hard work of increasing my activity to lose the weight. I also know myself and knew that I was probably not going to be able to push myself to that next level. So... enter Sheena and Living Lean! Like a lot of others in the program, I contacted Sheena after seeing some of the other success stories in the local paper. Unlike the glossy sell jobs for some of the other national weight loss programs, these were real people in my neighborhood who were successful on the program. I was so surprised at how quickly my body changed! I have lost nearly half of my body fat since I started (over 20 pounds of fat) and am stronger than I can ever remember. The trainers make the workouts fun and I found that I love spinning – who would have thought! It has also provided a very nice social outlet for me now that all my coworkers are so far away (my job moved to Boston). Nice people, good workouts, and a new found body.  
 Thank you, Sheena!

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this is not Steve

**ANSWER (from page 3):**  
 Steve broke 37 bones in a near-fatal motorcycle accident in 2009! Come hear him tell his story, along with the stories of the wonderful work being done at *Rancho De Sus Ninos*.

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