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Third Time a Charm for Orinda Mayor

By Laurie Snyder



Mayor Amy Worth (left) and Vice Mayor Sue Severson will lead the Orinda City Council for the coming year. Photos Ohlen Alexander

A familiar face has taken over the helm of the Orinda City Council. Amy Worth, who was elected to her first term on the council in 1988, will serve a third turn as mayor.

"Because we rotate the mayor's position each year, all the council members share this honor," said Worth. "It makes for a good team and working relationships."

Worth sat down recently with the Lamorinda Weekly to reflect on her many years of community service to the city and Bay Area. The conversation also gave a brief glimpse into the mayor's mindset as she readies for a State of the City speech expected to be delivered in February before the Orinda Rotary and Chamber of Commerce. "It is a great opportunity for the mayor to give community members both a reflection of where we are today and what we anticipate will be the issues in the coming year. I look forward to focusing both on local issues, as well as the regional issues that impact Orinda citizens. One exciting event during this coming year will be the opening of the new fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel," she said.

How has the city changed since your first term?

"Since Orinda incorporated in 1985, it has been managed by successive councils and a staff that have made prudent decisions, which have kept the city in a sound

financial state while providing the services that our residents want," explained Worth. "Through our commissions, we have been able to tap citizens who are experts in their fields, whether it is in the arts, recreation, roads or planning, to contribute their talents and experience on a volunteer basis. Consequently, decisions are made in a public, open process which incorporates solid advice from Orinda citizens." Over the years, she has witnessed a move toward greater and greater transparency. Council members and staff, she said, work hard to ensure that Orinda's citizens are made aware, in advance, of all committee meetings.

"For the city council to make good decisions on issues, our ability to do that is dependent on getting the best information from our citizens and staff and then to deliberate those decisions in an open, public meeting. There are always different perspectives on an issue, and I have come to believe that the open, transparent way we make decisions in local government is one of democracy's greatest strengths."

What are your top priorities for the coming year? What new ideas are bubbling?

"We have been working for a number of years to improve our roads and drains and with the passage of Measure L, we will have the opportunity to increase infrastructure funding and begin to implement our 10-year roads improvement plan. We began planning for a new affordable senior housing project over a decade ago and we will begin construction in January. While we operate the city on a limited budget, we have great park and recreation programs, along with the library, that provide services for our citizens of all ages. With the combination of more residents retiring as well as new families moving into Orinda, we have a wonderful opportunity to tailor our programs to evolving community needs."

Asked to identify Orinda's greatest strength, Worth did not hesitate. She pointed to the heart of the city - its citizens. "Whether it be in the schools, the city committees and commissions or the many community service organizations in Orinda, Orinda prospers because of that generous volunteer commitment to make our community the best place it can be."

Worth also highlighted, with great pride, Orinda's designation by Forbes Magazine as the second friendliest town in the U.S. (see article page A1).

"Orinda's volunteer spirit and generosity were a big part in achieving that wonderful honor," noted Worth. "Orinda residents have tremendous wisdom that has helped us steer a good course for our city this past quarter of a century."

Asked for her final thoughts Worth closed by saying, "I am honored to serve as mayor this year and look forward to working together with the Orinda School District and the Fire District to continue to make Orinda the wonderful community that it is. I am always available to talk with community members and can be reached at aworth@cityforinda.org."



Mayor Amy Worth's Orinda City Council colleague, Victoria Smith, has dubbed her "the mother of the fourth bore." Worth is shown here in 2010, clarifying a point for U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA).



"I am always available to talk with community members," says Mayor Amy Worth. She is shown here at the Orinda Farmer's Market in April 2011, where she and her fellow civic leaders often spend time listening and responding to residents' concerns.

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