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Politicians Sling Mud for a Good Cause

Orinda breaks ground on new affordable senior housing program

By Laurie Snyder



From left: Jonathan Klein, Eartha Newsong, Linda Mandolini, Congressman George Miller, Mayor Amy Worth, Woody Karp, California Assembly Member Joan Buchanan, Council Member Victoria Smith, Steve Dexter, Malcolm Brudigam, Kathleen Hamm. Photo Ohlen Alexander

affordable homes, which remain in short supply across the U.S.

Citing Orinda's recent designation by Forbes as America's second friendliest city, Union Bank senior vice president Jonathan Klein lauded Orinda as "a special place" for its level of civic engagement and opening of doors as he talked about his firm's trust in Eden's leadership. But the sweetest icing on the cake came with the announcement that the Orinda-based Ernest and Lola Poll Trust, working in conjunction with the Orinda Community Foundation, has pledged to donate \$60,000 to fund transportation services to help residents at the new apartments remain active, contributing members of the community.

"It's a wonderful time to be in the city of Orinda," said California Assembly Member Joan Buchanan, who observed that "great cities not only take care of their young," they look after their seniors. She praised Orindans for their persistence in "putting more than a decade of heart and soul" into bringing the project to fruition.

Additional presenters included Steve Dexter, Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Anderson's chief of staff; Lawrence Shepp who represented the Orinda Community Church; Malcolm Brudigam, the district representative for California Senator Mark DeSaulnier's office; and Kathleen Hamm, treasurer of Eden's Board of Directors.

"My mother always said, 'Take time to pause and celebrate the victories,'" said Worth.

Smiling as she looked out at faces "who have worked so hard for so many years" to bring additional affordable housing to the city of Orinda, Mayor Amy Worth kicked off the Orinda Senior Apartments' groundbreaking Jan. 25. Sixty-seven units will be built on the old library site at 2 Irwin Way by the non-profit Eden Housing, Inc. Once finished, Eden will then manage the facility.

An impressive slate of dignitaries shared memories of milestones achieved, thanking others who made the day possible, including Orindans Woody Karp and Linda Mandolini, Eden's senior project manager and president. "I don't believe there has been anyone more dedicated" to the project, Worth said of fellow Orinda City Council colleague Victoria Smith. "She has the incredible talent of seeing both every detail ... and the big picture." Beamed Smith, "This journey began 11 years ago today." She sparked hearty laughter with her recollections, including of Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu's remarks that the site "was too nice to be used for City Hall." She also thanked resident Eartha Newsong, calling her "the face of senior housing in Orinda."

"This really is a celebration about community," said Congressman George Miller who termed the apartments "a positive asset for this community" and the decision-making "the best of America." A long time affordable housing champion, Miller talked "fiscal cliff" before advocating for

Reach the reporter at: laurie@lamorindaweekly.com

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