

Published March 27th, 2013

Mayor Recalls Orinda's History and Spirit during State of the City Address

By Laurie Snyder



"Families move to Orinda to raise their children because of our excellent schools, quality of life, and wonderful sense of community," said Mayor Amy Worth during her recent 2013 State of the City address at the Orinda Country Club. Photo Andy Scheck

and still do. "Our current city mission states our goal succinctly, 'Orinda strives to provide excellent services in a fiscally responsible manner and to promote a safe, healthy and vibrant community.'" Paid staff and volunteer commissioners strive for transparent governance via publicly announced meetings and report postings on the city's website.

"We have lived within our means, and have been able to provide excellent services to our residents on a limited budget." City revenues come "from property and sales tax, along with fees which support our planning and parks and rec activities. Our paving budget comes from our franchise fees and our local share of the Measure J transportation sales tax." Major capital projects, however, "require setting aside funds over several years as well as securing local, state and federal grants to fund them."

Incorporation also gave Orinda local zoning control for land use. "Through our zoning ordinances and the thoughtful work of our Planning Commission, development projects throughout Orinda reflect the community character that our residents cherish." The city's library and parks and recreation programs "serve all ages," further enhancing life.

Worth then added a "fifth P" for partnerships - between the city and various county, state and federal agencies - and between the city and its residents. She thanked Orindans for supporting Measure L "to significantly increase our investment in road and drain repair," and urged everyone to continue working together with police to preserve Orinda's designation by the FBI as "one of the top five safest cities in California."

As to whom Orindans are in 2013: "Our population under 65 has gone down by 10 percent while our population of residents over 65 has increased by 10 percent." Just over 1,000 are now between ages 20 to 34 with the bulk - 8,169 - aged 35 to 65. "I think that affirms what we all know. That young people move here to raise their children and then stay through their retirement years."

Moving forward, she announced, "We are going to celebrate and honor individuals and groups who contribute to make Orinda the wonderful community and the friendliest city that it is."

Mayor Worth will deliver her State of the City Address again in a free presentation at 7 pm on April 15 in the Orinda Library Auditorium.

The first week of her latest term as mayor, said Amy Worth, was unforgettable - from the happy highs when Forbes Magazine declared Orinda to be America's second friendliest city to the frustration and worry, a few days later, as torrential rains triggered a state of emergency.

And yet, in spite of these rollercoaster moments, it was Orinda's history that was on her mind as she delivered her State of the City Address to a crowd of roughly 100 at the Orinda Country Club March 20.

Worth began by recounting the community's Spanish beginnings - a carve-out from four land grants from the Alta California area of Mexico - before paying tribute to Orinda's women. The city, in fact, owes its name to Alice Marsh Camron, a poetry-loving pioneer who persuaded her spouse to name their home "Orinda Park" in 1876 - in homage to Katherine Fowler Philips' poem, "The Matchless Orinda."

"I often think of that literary and intellectual heritage when I think of our Orinda library which will be 100 years old in 2015, and the tremendous role that women played in the intellectual and volunteer life of our community and schools." Families have relocated here, since that time, for "excellent schools, quality of life, and [Orinda's] wonderful sense of community."

Reflecting on the city's 1985 incorporation, she recalled how officials "focused on the four 'Ps' - public safety, planning, public works, and parks and recreation" -

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