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Roads Issue Drives Council's Selection of New Member

By Victor Ryerson



Darlene Gee Photo Ohlen Alexander

After an evening of interviewing candidates and listening to public comment, the Orinda City Council selected Darlene Gee to fill the vacancy created by Steve Glazer's May 28 departure at a special meeting on July 15. Although other candidates received more endorsements from public speakers at the meeting, Gee, a civil engineer, emerged as the unanimous choice of the council because of the looming issue of Orinda's current road repair project.

The \$10 million project is "the largest infrastructure project that the city has ever undertaken," observed Mayor Dean Orr. He made it clear that he favored a candidate with the level of expertise to address this issue, and pointed to Gee as his choice for this reason.

Vice Mayor Victoria Smith echoed Orr's sentiments, adding that Orinda had "lost Steve Glazer's expertise and skill set," including his work on the road issue, and also supported Gee for her road planning experience and expertise. Gee is currently the chair of the Orinda Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission, on which she has served since 2011. She highlighted her special interest in roads and drainage improvements, and under questioning by Smith about Orinda's roads issue, emphasized that it is "important to continue to deliver."

The council made its selection from a field of seven candidates (the eighth, Linda Delehunt, withdrew her application on July 14), and complimented all of the candidates for their qualifications, history of community service, and willingness to serve. The selection was made after two hours of structured interviewing and more than one hour of public comment.

Gee was sworn in as a council member on July 21 and will hold office through December 2016. The council adopted the unusual procedure to fill the vacancy, as permitted by law, in order to avoid the expense of a special election.

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