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Eve Phillips: Lamorinda's Prodigal Daughter on the Orinda City Council

By Victor Ryerson



Newly appointed Orinda mayor Victoria Smith with Eve Phillips, the newly appointed vice mayor at the Dec. 1 City Council meeting. Photo Ohlen Alexander

Never one to sit still collecting proverbial moss, Orindan Eve Phillips decided to run for a City Council seat in 2014, two years after she returned to the fold from a peripatetic career in the tech world. She won the seat. And now she is Orinda's new vice mayor to boot.

A Moraga-raised graduate of Mira-

monte High School's class of 1995, she is clearly also Orinda's youngest council member. As such, she is the representative, willing or not, of the generation that will inherit the future of Orinda. She celebrated her most recent birthday by attending the Dec. 1 council meeting, at which she was chosen for her new office by her

fellow council members, a definite vote of confidence in her vision and governance skills.

Do not let Phillips' youth deceive you. She has packed more education and experience into her years to date than most people do in a lifetime. A successful entrepreneur and the CEO of her own Internet company (www.empower-interactive.com), she has the seasoning and self-assurance one would expect of someone far more senior in the business world. She is also an accomplished athlete who has successfully completed 30 marathons, including the Boston Marathon that was the target of the terrorist bombing two years ago. The pace of her life does not appear to have fazed her a bit.

After graduating from high school, Phillips earned bachelor's and master's degrees in computer science and engineering from MIT, doing internships on Wall Street and at a venture capital firm in England as part of her education. When she completed her work at MIT, she landed a job at Trilogy, a "very entrepreneurial" Texas-based company that joint ventured with Ford Motor Company on ways Ford could engage in e-commerce. She traveled extensively and worked with the fervor of an

Olympian. Then the dot-com bubble burst.

"I was ready to come home," she says – but apparently not all the way home. Joining a private equity firm in San Francisco, she moved to Palo Alto to earn an MBA at Stanford, then returned to San Francisco, and finally moved to Orinda in 2012, where she started her online mental health care company with a respected psychiatrist.

She started to become interested in local politics the following year. Her decision to run for the council seat was motivated by "what was and wasn't going on in the city," she says. She was troubled by specific decisions being made by the council about land use matters, as well as questions of "process transparency." Examples of the former included the way the Monteverde senior residence was approved with relaxed height limits and parking requirements, and the denial of permitting for a Montessori school in the Phair's Building. Her explanation of her concern about the city's approval process is that the council "forgot that people on the 'outside' were unaware" of how these decisions were made. "Decisions were made without (public) understanding of why," she says. ... continued on page A9

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