

Letters to the Editor ... continued

Orinda City Council ... continued

Vote Gee, Miller, Hoxie, Weiner and Smith

Dear Editor,
Orinda is fortunate to have several very capable and great candidates for local offices that will continue the tradition of excellence in our community. I wholeheartedly endorse Darlene Gee and Inga Miller for City Council; Cara Hoxie and Hillary Weiner for OUSD; and Victoria Smith for MOFD.

Sue Severson
Orinda

WUDO Endorses Gee and Miller

Dear Editor,
Consensus at the Sept. 6 Orinda City Council meeting was that something needs to be done about the state of Orinda's downtown. Both the written correspondence sent to the city council and the speakers in the room were overwhelmingly in favor of downtown revitalization being a key priority moving forward. Orindans don't want talk, they want a real actionable plan.

A promising presentation from our new planning director Drummond Buckley showed that he is established in his new role, and that he and his staff are ready to lead the effort.

With this in mind, What's Up Downtown Orinda (WUDO) is officially endorsing two candidates for the open city council seats who have confirmed that the downtown issue will be a high priority should they win: Darlene Gee and Inga Miller. Through questionnaires and conversations with WUDO, both candidates have made it clear that they will work to see Orinda's downtown reach its full potential and become a town that is vibrant, charming and a place of pride.

Appointed to the city council in July 2015 to fill Steve Glazer's vacant seat, Gee will continue the current momentum in a "results-oriented way and with a fairly aggressive schedule" as she has stated. Miller represents the next generation of Orinda and will bring a fresh perspective and open mind to the position, and can use her legal expertise to help us, as she says, "chart a course for the future."

WUDO asks that Orindans who would like to see thoughtful progress Downtown cast their votes for these two worthy candidates on Nov. 8. The alternative is to let fear of change keep our downtown stuck in the past.

Laura McDowell, Ali Drasin, Laura Pavlovich, Emily Stoddard, Trudi Loscotoff, Darien Destino and Kirsten Larsen
WUDO Steering Committee
Orinda

The Real Differentiator in Orinda

Dear Editor,
There are four candidates for the two contested seats on the Orinda City Council. What are the real differentiators? Who matches your values?

All candidates want to see the road and storm drain rehabilitation completed expeditiously and frugally. All candidates would like to see a refreshed commercial downtown. All candidates appreciate the ardor and energy of the Friends of Orinda Creeks. All candidates support financial responsibility, excellent schools and airtight public safety. Don't be fooled. These are not significant points of differentiation.

But this is. Which candidates are publicly committed to maximizing the Orinda experience for its existing citizens? In contrast, which candidates advocate a high density, downtown residential component for hypothetical future residents as part of their "vision" for Orinda? Who would waive the 35 feet maximum downtown building height, and/or waive the maximum downtown building density of 10 units per acre? Who would allow new downtown development to provide fewer on-site parking spaces?

Who seems oblivious to the potential impact of downtown residential development on school class size,

increased traffic, public safety, and an exacerbated downtown parking squeeze? Who is unwilling to poke at Orinda's unbalanced funding of the Moraga-Orinda Fire Department?

Voters who don't hear a particular candidate's position on such matters, should flat-out ask, and keep asking, until they get a definitive answer.

Dr. Bruce London and education administrator, Linda Delehunt, the only two candidates without conflict-of-interest ties to the real estate and development special interests, are also the only two who seem to understand whom they would serve and where to draw the line. Existing Orinda voters don't have to guess exactly where they stand on such matters. There is indeed a clear choice in this election.

Owen Murphy
Orinda

Inga Miller for City Council

Dear Editor,
I strongly urge voters to elect Inga Miller to the Orinda City Council. My wife and I are 30-year residents of our village and are concerned with getting young people into city government to address the bewildering cast of problems that must be addressed to keep Orinda the unique and delightful place it is. Inga is a third generation Orindan who went to Orinda schools and now practices law here.

Inga is exceptionally intelligent and her service on the Orinda Parks and Recreation Commission has shown a devotion to Orinda and a marked ability to work in a cooperative setting and solve knotty municipal problems. Most importantly, she has the ability to listen and consider problems, an ability rare in anyone, but particularly in one so young. Inga has an excellent grasp of land use processing and procedures from her time as a journalist, reporting on municipal events. She is even handed and has no dogma or predetermined approach to land use issues or any other issues that may come before her.

National politics are so strident and divisive that it is refreshing to find a young person with a collegial, cooperative approach to problem solving. My wife and I have known Inga since she was a baby and have watched her grow and mature into an intelligent, extremely impressive young woman. If you have a chance to talk with her, I'm sure you will agree that she is an extraordinary candidate for the Orinda City Council. She is a problem-solver who looks for the things that unite us, not those that divide us. Inga's deep affection for Orinda and her willingness to take up the difficult task of city leadership presents us with the rare and exciting opportunity to vote for her and enhance the council with a tireless advocate and an exceptional leader. We urge all of you to vote for Inga for Orinda.

Wilson F. Wendt
Orinda

Leadership Needed for Thriving Downtown

Dear Editor,
Like a lot of young families in Orinda, my wife and I moved from San Francisco seeking a tight-knit community with great public schools and beautiful open spaces. We haven't been disappointed - Orinda is an amazing town in so many ways. But looking back, I'm reminded that we looked past its tired downtown and pot-hole riddled roads, believing it to be just a matter of time before common sense would prevail and a thriving downtown (and retail tax base) would finally take shape.

Having grown up Lafayette and witnessed the gradual improvements to its downtown, with improved markets, dining, streetscapes, and high-quality housing for all ages, surely Orinda would capitalize on its own obvious opportunities - albeit in a way befitting of its own small town charm. However, six years later, it's clear to me that nothing is going to improve in Downtown Orinda without strong new leadership at city council.

Darlene Gee and Inga Miller represent that opportunity for thoughtful, results-oriented change. Both of these candidates recognize that a thriving downtown which caters to its existing residents does not equate to traffic, congestion and certain doom - it equates to better community. It means frequent encounters with neighbors, a better tax base for roads, parks, and schools. It means a town that we can be even more proud to call home. Darlene and Inga understand that serving on the Orinda City Council requires an ability to listen and respect all of its residents.

For too long, Orinda has listened only to those that choose to look backward for fear of change, all the while ignoring the voices of a large, engaged base of residents and families that represent the future of this town. If you agree, please get out and vote this election for Darlene Gee and Inga Miller - Downtown Orinda will not improve on its own.

Alex Waterbury
Orinda

Gee, Miller for Orinda

Dear Editor,
Orinda is very fortunate that Darlene Gee and Inga Miller have stepped forward as candidates for the two open seats on the city council this November. Both have the professional backgrounds and experience that will enable them to be significant contributors at this level, especially at a time when the community is about to embark on a process of planning for the future of its downtown.

Darlene is a graduate civil engineer with an MBA degree. She has had a successful 30 year career as an engineering consultant. She heads the San Francisco office of the global engineering firm HNTB Corporation. Inga is a real estate law specialist with her own practice in Orinda. This has given her valuable insight into the process by which commercial real estate is improved and leased. Both women are quite familiar with how to get things done in the city work environment, having served on important Orinda Commissions in the past.

Both Darlene and Inga look forward to the challenge of shaping the process of renewal that downtown Orinda needs. Importantly, each is convinced that Orinda's small town feel can and should be preserved in whatever is done to improve its commercial districts. If both are elected to the city council, the community would benefit in major ways from the talents of these experienced, capable professionals.

Tom Trowbridge
Orinda

MOFD Board of Directors

Smith Has Experience for MOFD

Dear Editor,
I am compelled to express my support for Victoria Smith, who is running for Director, Division 5 with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. Her experience, and success, as a councilmember and mayor of Orinda has positioned her well to continue those achievements with the MOFD.

During my tenure in that same seat, I worked on several challenging issues with Victoria and found her to be well informed or a quick study on the critical issues facing the department. While serving the city of Orinda, Victoria was a valuable contributor and facilitator for the creation of the Lamorinda Emergency Preparedness Program, which helps strengthen our first responder network and leverage existing community resources.

Another important collaboration I'd like to highlight is a thorough and lengthy examination of the so-called funding inequity between Orinda and Moraga relative to the funding of the fire district. Her challenger for the seat has chosen this same issue as a focal point of his campaign. His mistaken focus threatens to waste even more staff time and district funds by revisiting this misleading issue that three independent elected bodies has long ago proven as completely unfound-

ed, and possibly illegal.

The district cannot afford this loss of institutional memory and experience it needs to move ahead and focus on future challenges and pressing needs. Please join me in voting for Victoria and moving the MOFD towards a strong future.

Brook Mancinelli
Orinda

Smith for Fire District

Dear Editor,
This November, my colleague Victoria Smith will run for election to the Moraga Orinda Fire District Board of Directors. I hope my neighbors in District 5 (North Orinda) will join me in supporting her in this effort.

It has been a pleasure to serve on the city council with Victoria and work together on many of the issues facing our community. Emergency services and preparedness have always been a priority for Victoria and she understands the importance our citizens place on these efforts. It is a natural transition for Victoria to move her dedication to public service to the MOFD Board. Her leadership and focus on fiscal stability will be welcome attributes to the board. Victoria is a consensus builder and her experience balancing our city budget and prioritizing our capital projects will serve her well in this next endeavor.

Victoria's efforts and dedication to Orinda go far beyond her three terms of service on the council. Victoria has also served on our planning commission, volunteered in scout troops, and served in our school communities. We are fortunate to continue to have her leadership in Orinda.

Please help to make sure Victoria is successful in November.

Dean Orr
Orinda

Craig Jorgens for the MOFD Board

Dear Editor,
After spending considerable time over the past decade understanding the workings of MOFD, the services it provides to Orinda residents and the money those residents pay for those services, I consider Craig Jorgens to be the superior choice of candidates for the position of MOFD Director representing North Orinda. His experience in managing large organizations and his background in finance and engineering make him the stronger of the two candidates by far. More information can be found at www.VoteJorgens.com.

His opponent, Victoria Smith, is a real estate attorney and would be the third attorney out of five board members if elected. Her experience includes 12 years on the Orinda City Council which she is leaving with a partially repaired road system and an undefined downtown plan, despite at least three citizen groups clamoring for action for several years. She is a weak second choice. More details on how the two candidates compare can be found at www.OrindaTaskForce.org/Craig_Jorgens_Endorsement

Steve Cohn
Orinda

Orinda School Board

NO on Butler for OUSD

Dear Editor,
A "No" vote on Sarah Butler is a "Yes" vote for our Orinda schools and kids. While a nice person in many ways, Sarah lacks the key qualities that make for an effective leader. Two of the four years I served on the OUSD board coincided with Sarah and I witnessed up close the deficiencies.

Many of those who have worked closely with Sarah and no longer support her candidacy include former and current OUSD board members. Sarah has difficulties making decisions with routine efforts to push votes down the road or abstaining all together. This is compounded by being late (22 times and counting according to official board minutes) and on a few occasions yelling and abruptly leav-

ing meetings.

One of the big decisions that we faced during my time on the board was how to best use the multi-million dollar facilities money that came from the sale of property. I, and all of the other board members, felt a task force to really study all the options, visit the school sites, and meet with parents and staff would yield important recommendations. Sarah voted no on the formation of the task force which, ultimately, helped to prioritize how to best utilize the one-time funds.

I actually endorsed and voted for Sarah when she first ran for election but, after seeing her on the board, I feel it's important to let other Orinda voters know some of what I now know and to say enough is enough. Sarah has already served on the OUSD board for the past four years and our Orinda schools don't need another four. Please join me in voting for the very qualified alternatives.

Christopher Severson,
OUSD Board of Trustees 2010-2014
Orinda

Butler for OUSD Board

Dear Editor,
Elections are hard, especially this one. Luckily, this year I have one easy choice - reelecting Sarah Butler to the Orinda School Board.

I don't go to as many school meetings as I should; somehow, work, parenting and plain old tiredness get in the way. And yet, when I do go, I often see Sarah Butler there, whether it's at my Parents Club meeting, or EFO and occasionally, at my School Site Council. I think to myself: she doesn't have kids in Orinda's schools anymore, and yet, she is working harder than I am for a job that doesn't pay a dime.

At the meetings, I see Sarah listening carefully to everyone, and occasionally asking probing questions or explaining school board policy. She is intelligent and empathetic. She genuinely cares about the interests of all the stakeholders of Orinda schools. She is the only candidate to receive the Orinda Education Association's endorsement; our teachers support her!

Both of Sarah's children went to Orinda schools and they are now in college. She is free to advocate for every child, including mine. When I talk to her, I feel she understands the concerns and worries of someone like me. I have also seen her voice principled dissent with honesty and courage. I trust her to look out for my daughter's interests and to protect the school district from being blindsided by inadvertent mistakes.

She listens, thinks deeply and works hard. I hope you will join me in voting for Sarah Butler for Orinda School Board.

Amy T. Chen
Orinda

Teachers Association Supports Butler

Dear Editor,
The Orinda Education Association, an organization representing all of the teachers in the Orinda Union School District, is pleased to announce its endorsement of incumbent, Sarah Butler, for the office of School Board Trustee.

The term, Trustee, is particularly applicable to Ms. Butler, who views positions on the board as a public trust and whose actions demonstrate her awareness of this responsibility. In making its endorsement decision OEA closely examined Ms. Butler's experience, past record with regard to support of the interests of teachers, and other endorsements received by the candidate. The teachers of Orinda feel confident that Ms. Butler will continue to champion the inclusion of our voices in the community of stakeholders that strives to provide a truly exceptional education for the students of Orinda.

Katherine Palmer-Collins
OEA Vice President
Orinda