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OUSD welcomes new board member Liz Daoust as Rossiter exits

By Sora O'Doherty



Liz Daoust Photos Sora O'Doherty



Julie Rossiter

As Liz Daoust was the only person nominated to run for the open seat on the Orinda Union School District board; no election was necessary and the district was spared the expense. She will take her seat in December for a four-year term, along with returning members Carol Brown and Jason Kaune, who supported her by running with her as a slate.

Daoust is the mother of three girls, ages 8, 7 and 5, all attending Glorietta this year, and Daoust is thrilled to have them all in one

school. Already a board member of the Friends of the Orinda Library, Daoust is devoted to volunteerism, and is very excited to take on the challenge of the OUSD. "I really love serving this town," she said during a recent interview, adding, "I really care about kids, teachers, and community. Teachers are my favorite people," she mused, "I am so impressed by the amount of energy and patience they devote to their students."

Daoust earned a master's from Harvard in educational policy

and management. During graduate school, she tutored and started teaching middle school as soon as she completed her degree. She has also been dean of students both in New Hampshire and Palo Alto. Thus she has a combination of both teaching and administrative skills that is, she says, somewhat rare among school administrators. Daoust says that she respects all the members of the school board and is excited to work with them and with Superintendent Carolyn Seaton, whom Daoust praises as being a wonderful communicator who has assembled a great team.

The two school bonds on the November ballot have been taking up some of Daoust's time, as she campaigns for their passage. She anticipates that her term on the board will be busy with facility upgrades. Although the position on the school board is voluntary, Daoust takes a professional approach to it. "I see this as my next job," she says.

Outgoing OUSD Board Member Julie Rossiter feels she is leaving the district in a good place.

When Rossiter was first elected

to the OUSD board in 2010, it was in the middle of a budget crisis that brought deep cuts to the school budget. But in the intervening eight years she believes that the district has made great progress, developing a new strategic plan, adopting a facilities master plan, and hiring Seaton as the new superintendent. "These are all positive changes," Rossiter believes, and represent a ton of accomplishments. As she finishes her second and final term on the board, Rossiter is hard at work promoting the two school bond issues that will be on the ballot in November.

So what does Rossiter anticipate new board member Liz Daoust will be facing when she joins the board? If the school bond passes, Rossiter anticipates lots of positive developments on the facilities side. She hopes that work will continue to try to centralize fundraising efforts, similar to what Lafayette and Moraga have done, to shift the effort from the individual school level to the district level.

Other continuing and upcoming projects for the board include

professional development for teachers and an ongoing commitment to hiring and retaining the best teachers. Each of the schools in the district is developing "maker spaces" where kids can come and experiment with the process of making things. Orinda Intermediate School offers this as an elective, Rossiter says, while at the elementary schools students may have access to the maker space during recess, at lunch, or after school. In the maker space kids might find robotics, or LEGO walls. One of the developments to look out for if the bonds pass is the future development of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area. One of the bonds specifically provides for broadening community access to the nature area. Rossiter would like to see a classroom space added to area, and ultimately thinks the district will be able to provide a much more robust facility and programing.

Although she'll be off the board, Rossiter intends to remain actively engaged in education, be it fundraising or policy advocacy.

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