

Published January, 9th 2019

New Orinda mayor to bring her message to the people

By Sora O'Doherty



Mayor Inga Miller Photo Sora O'Doherty

For new Orinda Mayor Inga Miller, it's all about communication.

Miller, council member since 2016 and selected by the council as mayor for 2019, intends to hold office hours at city hall the second Wednesday of each month to meet with constituents. She also plans to send out a mayor's newsletter, in addition to holding the monthly mayor's liaison meetings with representatives of Orinda organizations.

Miller is a fan of Orinda's fiscally conservative history. "Fiscal reserves," she notes, "allowed us to have an emergency fund" which enabled the city to move swiftly to fix the Miner Road sinkhole. She'd like to continue that tradition as the city works through its next budget and looks at how to maintain its roads and perhaps to add new facilities.

Miller took part in the recent wildfire evacuation drill on Moraga Way and found it fascinating. "One cool thing," she mentioned, was that the city was partnering with Google and Apple so that their maps were refreshed every minute. She also cited the involvement of the Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group and the Community Emergency Response Team in the drill that involved some 530 homes in the Moraga Country Club area. "It seemed to work," she said. There will be another drill in Orinda in the future.

Miller is a strong supporter of downtown development. She views the Streetscape Master Plan as very important for recharging downtown. "Our council has said, `we're open for business, please come. Our city manager and planning director would love to talk to you.'" This is a change, she believes, adding that the city has been working hard to see that fees for development are reasonable. "I don't think that it is overly optimistic to believe that we'll see some changes," according to Miller, who would like to see facade improvements and more locally serving businesses.

More housing is needed, Miller agrees, but she sees recent state legislation as "arrogant." She has looked at other areas to see how local redevelopment has worked out-or not worked out. To build Dodger Stadium, she noted, Los Angeles used redevelopment funding to wipe out a neighborhood. She is not in favor of allowing BART, which she says is in huge financial trouble, to be in charge of development. She is also concerned about any plan that would allow development without assuring that there are sufficient services, such as schools, streets, police and firefighters.

Miller is very enthusiastic about working with new Vice Mayor Darlene Gee, who takes charge when the mayor is unavailable. Gee was appointed to the council shortly before Miller was elected.

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