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New chief takes up the reins at OPD

By Sora O'Doherty



Chief David M. Cook

Orinda City Manager Steve Salomon announced the selection of Lieutenant David M. Cook from the Contra Costa County Office of the Sheriff to serve as the city's new police chief.

"I am looking forward to working with Chief Cook on the continual improvement of emergency response capabilities and in maintaining strong relationships with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, the School Districts, and the community," Salomon said.

Cook was chosen after a rigorous process including interviews with two different oral boards, participating in a written exercise and going through multiple one-on-one interviews with the city manager.

Cook has been with the Contra Costa Sheriff's Office for over 20 years since the beginning of his career in 1998. He has progressed through the ranks, serving in many capacities ranging from detention, patrol, homeland security and emergency services, to special operations. His most recent assignment was as commander of the Marine Services and Air Support Unit. He holds a master's degree in emergency service administration from California State University, Long Beach.

Cook started his new post on Sept. 23. Upon being notified that he was selected to serve as Orinda's police chief, Cook said, "I am honored to have been selected as your Chief of Police. I look forward to serving the community to keep Orinda a safe place to work and live." Contra Costa County Sheriff David Livingston said, "I think David is a great choice as Orinda's next Chief of Police. I look forward to continuing the strong relationship between the Sheriff's Office and City of Orinda."

Cook lives in east Contra Costa County and plans, among other things, to continue Chief Mark Nagel's close relationship with the Orinda Union School District. He has already met with Superintendent Carolyn Seaton. "Our most important task," Cook said, "is keeping the kids safe," so he plans to work very closely with the schools.

During his time with the sheriff's office, Cook has been a proponent of using drones in police work. "Drones are a very effective tool," he believes, and offer incredible assistance to provide extra public safety and extra safety for working police officers. "When searching for a suspect," he explained, for example, "a drone can move ahead of officers and warn them of any dangers they could not yet see. The drone's view can be adjusted, can cover large areas with a bird's eye view. Drones allow officers on the ground to see over the next ridge, or behind obstacles." He added that drones are very effective for search and rescue efforts, allowing large swaths of land to be searched

at the same time.

Orinda's best asset, Cook thinks, is community involvement. Public resources are never enough, he said. But an active and engaged populace helps. The biggest threat to Orinda is the threat of wildfire, according to Cook. "Orinda's a beautiful town," he notes, "but there are a lot of trees and dry grass. We've learned a lot from the fires over the past," he said, adding, "Fires move very aggressively uphill" and Orinda is very hilly. Cook looks forward to working closely with the MOFD and Chief Winnacker.

Upon taking up the reins at OPD, one of the new chief's first challenges was a weekend car jacking on Camino Sobrante. Cook mentioned that a detective was aggressively following leads about the incident, in which no one was hurt but a Toyota Tacoma was stolen from its owner at gunpoint.

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