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In-lieu parking variance fee approved

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The question was raised, "Why not charge developers 100% of the cost?" Foster explained that in-lieu fees are a balancing act. If the fees are too high, they will discourage development. He pointed to the neighboring city of Lafayette, which started out with a high parking variance fee of \$38,000, but didn't collect owing to a lack of development. When Lafayette lowered its fees to \$19,200, the city collected more because developments happened. City Manager Steve Salomon pointed out that the level of the fees can be changed once Orinda sees how they work.

Council Member Nick Kosla pointed out that Orinda has had a very difficult time getting development going. He supported the measure, and said he would be fine lowering the top tier of the fees to the fourth parking space and above. Council Member Inga Miller agreed that this is one way to spur development, even though, she said, "the unknown is scary." The measure was supported by Paul Ugenti, owner of the land at 25A Orinda Way, who said that he will be submitting a new plan for the property soon. Former planning commission chair Terry Murphy joined the planning commission in recommending approval of the fee, especially for land use changes. Michael Bowen said that the Friends of Orinda Creeks enthusiastically supported the measure and urged adoption without change.

Planning Director Drummond Buckley pointed out that the five-year bar for existing development is intended to rule out rapid changes of use. Salomon said that staff will return with a resolution with some options. The ordinance passed with unanimous support of the council.

Gee moves up to mayor, Worth returns as vice mayor in Orinda reorg



New Mayor Darlene Gee, left, and Vice Mayor Amy Worth sworn in. Photo Sora O'Doherty

By Sora O'Doherty

After being officially elected as mayor of Orinda, Darlene Gee joked about having the most experienced vice mayor in Amy Worth. Both were unanimously elected by the Orinda City Council and took the oath of office with city clerk Sheri Smith at the council's Dec. 3 meeting.

Gee was first elected in 2012 and reelected in 2016. She became

vice mayor in 2018. Her current term of office expires at the end of 2020. Worth was first elected in 1998 and has been continuously reelected for six terms of office. Her current term expires at the end of 2022. She has served as mayor four times, more than any other mayor of Orinda. If precedent holds, she will advance to mayor for another term in 2020.

Outgoing mayor Inga Miller was honored with a proclamation from the other members of the city

council, by County Supervisor Candice Andersen and a representative of Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan as well as state Sen. Steve Glazer. Andersen praised Miller's tremendous commitment to the citizens of Orinda. Dan de Busschere said, "We started out with a rookie and ended up with a battle-hardened veteran who was on national television explaining to the world that Orinda is a welcoming place."



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