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OUSD and City Council adopt joint proclamation on diversity, equity and inclusion

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda's city council and its school board have adopted a joint proclamation on diversity, equity and inclusion as part of their efforts to cooperate on substantive initiatives and action to further these values. Orinda Mayor Darlene Gee and Council Member Inga Miller attended the Orinda Union School District meeting and OUSD Board Member Liz Daoust and Superintendent Carolyn Seaton attended the city council meeting. Daoust said that she personally so cherishes the collaboration between the city council and the school board, and said the more we can do together, the better. Seaton spoke of the Joint Committee on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Action, and emphasized that words are important, but action has to follow. The joint proclamation resolves that the city of Orinda and the school board reaffirm their shared values of compassion, equity, inclusion and diversity, and their commitment to action to build a world in which everyone is valued and understood. They vowed to work to expand anti-bias training for elected officials, staff and the community. The joint proclamation also adopted the pledge previously signed by stakeholders in the OUSD as a part of the continued commitment to build awareness and increase tolerance. The pledge sets forth ways to include others and empower "myself and others" to stand up against hate. Some of the elements of this pledge include creating an accepting community and engaging in conversations to recognize and address bias, racism, and all forms of intolerance. In addition, the pledge includes protecting others from prejudice and discrimination, objecting when someone is being bullied, and respecting and embracing everyone for who they are.

Recent city council candidate Latika Malkani said that she was really glad to see the city working with the school board on a series of town halls. She added, "I think that a lot of us would like the opportunity to work together and be involved in these meetings." Malkani is active in the Miramonte Parents Group. Miller thanked the mayor for all her work with the OUSD, and for bringing the proclamation to the city council. Council Member Amy Worth said, "We need to do this as a community for our children," and called for a whole community conversation. "We really want input from the public," she said. "Our engagement can really be strengthened by more input." She recalled a public rally last spring when all ages came together in a really heartfelt way following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Following a unanimous vote by both boards, Gee said she was very, very happy.

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