



See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
**City of Orinda:**  
 www.cityoforinda.org  
 Phone (925) 253-4200  
**Chamber of Commerce:**  
 www.orindachamber.org  
**The Orinda Association:**  
 www.orindaassociation.org

**Orinda Public Meetings**  
**City Council**  
**Special Meetings**  
 Monday, Jan. 4, 4 p.m.  
 Wednesday, Jan 6, 4 p.m.  
 Saturday, Jan 16, 9 a.m.  
 By Teleconference Only  
 Tuesday, Jan. 11, 7 p.m.  
 Regular Meeting  
 By Teleconference Only  
**Planning Commission**  
 Tuesday, Jan. 12, 7 p.m.  
 By Teleconference Only

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- Billy and Sherrie Perlstein

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## Worth becomes mayor of Orinda for historic fifth term; Fay is vice mayor



Amy Worth Lamo archive

By Sora O'Doherty

As Amy Worth was sworn in for her fifth term as mayor of Orinda, and Dennis Fay his first term as vice mayor, outgoing mayor Darlene Gee received acclaim from both the council and the public for her year of service, which was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Gee and Council Member Inga Miller in No-

ember won reelection to the council for another four years.

Worth began by presenting outgoing mayor Gee with a plaque featuring a gavel, saying, "Darlene, you have done a phenomenal job." No one, she said, could have anticipated what 2020 would be like, and Worth said that under Gee's hand, the council was able to continue its work smoothly. Zoom worked beautifully, she said, and the council was able to engage the public and continue to do the public's work. The council also gave Gee flowers and a proclamation, which was read out during the meeting.

New vice mayor Fay said that he first got to know Gee professionally when they were both members of the Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission. "I see why people who have worked with her and for her like her so much and are so supportive of her," Fay said, adding to Gee, "Everybody who has known you likes you."

Nick Kosla recounted

how after his election to the council, things were going beautifully, until the AirBnB shooting at Halloween, followed by Public Safety Power Shutoffs. "I thought that was the worst thing that could happen," he said. That was before 2020 began.

Melanie Light, chair of the FireWise Council, said, "I think grace under pressure is what you would apply to mayor Gee. She made us feel like we were the only crisis going on." Light also praised Gee's sense of humor as "very sly, very dry, and fantastic." Former mayor of Lafayette, Don Tatzin, who appeared on behalf of Sen. Steve Glazer, commented, "We always knew that Orinda was being well run, but we can't say that about all the cities in the Senator's district."

In response, Gee thanked everyone, saying that "2020 wasn't exactly what I was expecting, but I'm very proud of what we accomplished this year." Among the accomplishments, she counted making progress on down-

town planning, having a dialog with the police, and maintaining city services. "Everybody had to adapt and to pivot, and you kept it all going." She told city manager Steve Salomon that she couldn't have done it without his knowledge and support. She thanked her family, and the community for pulling together in a tough time. "It was really inspiring, she concluded, "and now Orinda is moving forward with its most experienced mayor at the helm."

Salomon returned the compliments, saying it was a pleasure to work with Gee, who, he said, was "always available and has always given him very good, thoughtful feedback." He praised her for the suggestions she made after the Halloween shooting on how to move forward with the short-term rental ordinance, and attributed the lack of problems with it in no small measure to her contributions. "Orinda is extremely fortunate to have her on the council," Salomon concluded.

## Orinda jump-starts Measure R work

By Sora O'Doherty

The city of Orinda didn't miss a beat getting started on the work voters authorized when they approved Measure R, a supplemental sales tax. Just days after the certification of the election, the city council met on Dec. 17 to establish the new oversight commission required by the mea-

sure, and to approve some ideas for how to spend the initial revenue the tax will bring in before the end of fiscal year 2020-21. The following day, the city clerk put out a call for applicants for the oversight commission, as well as for the city's other committees and commissions.

The deadline for applying for the committees and commissions, including the new Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission, is close of business on Jan. 22; interviews will be held on Jan. 30 and in February there will be term expirations, as well as the new positions of the SSTOC. According to the call for applications, the SSTOC was recently formed to oversee funding from Measure R and make spending recommendations to the city council. The new commission will also review priority needs of the city addressing the threat of wildfire; disaster response planning; repair of critical drainage facilities; and the long-term maintenance of public roads. There will be from seven to 10 members of the SSTOC, which will replace the long-standing Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission.

Before the Commission can get up and running, however, staff brought to the city council some ideas of how to spend the first revenue brought in by the new tax. Although the tax will begin being collected next April, the city will not actually see the revenue until late May or early June. Finance Director Paul Rankin anticipates that the revenue expected for the latter half of fiscal year 2020-21 will be approximately \$600,000. Staff presented the city council with a plan to spend between \$400,000 to \$600,000. The plan includes funding an Orinda-only chip-

per crew at a cost of \$40,000 to \$60,000, and purchasing a maintenance truck and a towable chipper machine for another \$120,000 to \$150,000, plus general equipment maintenance tools, fuel, disposal fees and miscellaneous equipment at a cost of \$10,000 to \$40,000 and another \$80,000 to \$120,000 for tree trimming and removal on city-maintained properties.

This chipper portion of the plan was enthusiastically welcomed both by the council and the public, many of whom suggested that the council move forward with two chipper crews and equipment for Orinda. However, it was the sense of the council that the city should try walking before running, and get an understanding of how the program will work.

Two proposals considered lower priority or requiring more research involved bulk purchasing home vent-hardening material for discounted purchase by verified Orinda residents and installing fencing at Orinda Oaks Park to allow for animal grazing to continuously mitigate wildfire fuel. Council members appreciated that Lamorinda CERT is already working on a vent-hardening project, and felt that more information was needed on the costs of various alternatives for dealing with the wildfire danger at the city-owned Orinda Oaks Park and adjacent Mulholland Ridge Open Space. The council members understood that the area is of high priority to MOFD Chief Dave Winnacker, and that the city risks being cited for being in violation of the Fire Code if nothing is done, but there were questions about whether grazing was the best way forward, and if so, what types of animals and what

type of fencing would be best.

The council also agreed that both the name and the bylaws of the new commission could be amended in the future.

Resident Latika Malkani recommended that the council consider some additional diversity criteria, including demographic diversity, and urged the council to consider adding newer residents to the commission, as well as people who can facilitate communications with the community. Lastly, she urged the council to consider appointing some community member or members who may have opposed Measure R and who may be concerned about how the tax money is spent. Malkani clarified that she herself voted for the new tax.

Resident Charles Porges was concerned about the broad proposed scope of the commission, and worried that it wouldn't be possible to find enough local expertise to fill all those roles, such as dealing with all possible emergencies, fire, earthquakes, floods, evacuations, as well as roads and drains. He inquired if the commission would have a budget that would allow for hiring consultants, or if it would need to come to the city council for permission for each consultant.

Jud Hammon, chair of the CIOC, expressed his appreciation to the council and staff for diving in so quickly, noting that it shows a real understanding of how important the problem really is.

The Statement of Interest form for Orinda committees and commissions is available at <https://tinyurl.com/orindaform> or by contacting Sheri Smith, City Clerk at [ssmith@cityoforinda.org](mailto:ssmith@cityoforinda.org) or calling (925) 253-4221.

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