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Orinda selects David Biggs as new city manager

By Sora O'Doherty



David Biggs Photo provided

After an extensive search, Orinda selected Hercules city manager David Biggs to succeed outgoing city manager Steve Salomon. Biggs, who will start with Orinda in April, has a long career in the management of cities in California. He served as city manager in Carson, Tustin, and Morgan Hill, as well as assistant city manager of Redondo Beach and other positions with other California cities. His career also included working in Australia for two and a half years for an industrial development agency. Biggs has been city manager of Hercules for about seven years.

The city council welcomed Biggs on board at its Feb. 2 meeting. Biggs, who had another meeting to attend, made time to join the Orinda meeting. Biggs told the council that he is looking forward to joining them on the fifth of April, and appreciates the vote of confidence. Noting his regional and subregional experience, Biggs feels that he has "a good running start," adding, "Orinda is a beautiful island, but we are integrated." The new city manager invited people in Orinda to stop and chat with him if they see him out walking, which is his favorite lunchtime activity.

Biggs has a BA in political science from California State University at Fullerton and an MBA from UC Irvine. In addition, he completed a certificate program in Continuous Improvement and Quality Management from the UC Santa Cruz extension program. Currently the president of the California Redevelopment Association, Biggs is also an active member of the California Association for Local Economic Development, for which he is a past board member and chair; the International Association of Shopping Centers; and, the International City/County Management Association with a Credentialed Manager designation. In addition, Biggs is a member of the Urban Land Institute. During the effort to develop downtown Orinda, the city received a report from ULI.

There will be no fiscal impact to the hiring of a new city manager, as the position is already provided for in the current budget. The annual costs as outlined in the employment agreement include: a salary of \$243,000; a car/technology allowance of \$6,000; annual retirement plus Medicare taxes \$42,491; annual Life and LTD estimated at \$1,714; and estimated maximum annual health insurance benefits estimated to be \$26,927.

Biggs is married to Cate, who is from Australia, and they have two sons. Their oldest son, Adrian, works for the city of Palo Alto as assistant engineer. Their youngest son, Dylan, is on a gap year from graduate school and is living in Australia with his uncle.

Biggs welcomed the opportunity to work in Orinda, which means that he won't have to relocate from Hercules. An early riser, he hopes to miss the worst of commute traffic. Biggs says that he grew up, professionally, in the redevelopment track, and sees Orinda as a city with a great start of developing the downtown area, which is says has good bones. "I believe I'll be able to contribute to help enhance downtown," Biggs says. Since city managers get together at least once a month, Biggs knows outgoing city manager Steve Salomon, and also knows members of the city council as well as city staff members. He acknowledges that Salomon's footsteps will be tough to step into.

Hercules and Orinda are cities with similar characteristics, according to Biggs. Both cascade down from the hills, although Hercules borders the San Pablo Bay. Hercules has a somewhat larger population, at around 25,000, than Orinda. Both Contra Costa County cities have big issues with fire safety. Biggs remarked that he walks most days at lunch, often along the densely wooded Ohlone Creek. Hercules also has Refugio Valley Creek, a permanent creek that runs through the city.

Biggs has worked on a lot of challenges facing local government, including policing issues. Along with the Hercules police chief, he has hosted two town halls, and continued to engage with the community. He has been working on an update of Hercules' safety element of general plan, as well as the hazards mitigation plan. Hercules is at the intersection of Highway 4 and Highway 80, and has a big transit center, so Biggs has enjoyed working relations with BART.

The start date in April is influenced by the fact that Biggs' contract with Hercules requires 60-days notice. Biggs says he is looking forward to starting work in Orinda, which he believes will be a very good fit.

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