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Dennis Fay to serve as Orinda mayor for first time, Inga Miller returns as vice mayor



Dennis Fay Lamo archive

By Sora O'Doherty

At its Dec. 14 meeting, the Orinda city council, following its usual protocol, elected Vice Mayor Dennis Fay to become Orinda's next mayor. Inga Miller, as the next highest vote-getter in the 2020 election, will serve as vice mayor, a position she has held before. Miller served as mayor in 2019 and was re-elected to the city council in 2020.

As Fay steps up to his first term as mayor, he is replac-

ing Amy Worth, who has served 23 years on the Orinda city council and has held the office of mayor for an historic five terms. Worth will remain on the council. Although Fay and Miller were warmly welcomed after being sworn in by city clerk Sheri Smith, the real kudos of the evening went to Worth, as public figures expressed their respect and affection for her.

Jill Ray, representing Contra Costa County Supervisor Candance Andersen who was unable to attend, expressed the supervisor's feeling that Worth has served "with great respect and decorum, has worked collaboratively to find common good." Ray offered the supervisor's congratulations on Worth's six terms of service, having served as mayor five times, and said that she looks forward to working with mayor Fay.

Former mayor Joyce Hawkins praised Worth as "the queen of complimenting anyone and everyone with whom she has worked," and as "an epitome of graciousness and diplomacy."

Hawkins congratulated Worth on a job well done, and thanked her for her years of service. Worth spoke about how instrumental Hawkins was on getting Worth onto the council and preparing her to serve.

The council members read out a heartfelt proclamation honoring Worth's service as mayor. The proclamation crowned Worth as "the queen of Zoom," being the first mayor in Orinda's history to lead a complete year's worth of city council meetings remotely, "bringing city government to Orinda's living rooms," and having the best Zoom backgrounds of any elected official in the Bay Area. The proclamation says that Orinda has benefited from Worth's deep understanding of regional transportation and solid waste issues, adding that the city also enjoyed Worth's knowledge of and perspective on Orinda's history.

Living up to Hawkins' words, Worth took the opportunity to thank everyone on the council, city staff, the executive team, city volunteers

and partners, and her family. She said it had been an honor to serve, and that having the entire year on Zoom was a lot of fun. She praised the city for keeping government running during the pandemic, and thanked the county for its help, especially with COVID. She recognized the Orinda library, an institution close to her heart, that has been in Orinda for 100 years, and this year celebrated the 20th anniversary of the new library building. She thanked state and federal representatives, Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, state Sen. Steve Glazer and Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan. Worth noted that it was especially poignant that in November the fourth bore of the Caldecott tunnel was named for former Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher. In thanking her family, Worth noted that she is enjoying being a grandmother in Orinda, and that her oldest grandchild is now in kindergarten at Wagner Ranch Elementary School.

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Orinda's housing plan tool is ready for public use

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda residents can now draw their own version of where they would put new housing in Orinda. The new tool, A Balancing Act, was obtained by the city of Orinda from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the agency that assigns to each city, town and county the number of new housing units they are required to provide for in the next cycle of the housing element. Each is required to zone for new housing, but is not required to actually provide new housing units.

ABAG offered a number of free licenses to an online public engagement tool, known as A Balancing Act, and Orinda was awarded one of the licenses. Now available online, the tool allows the public to offer comments and suggestions on proposed housing site inventory.

According to the city, the simulation tool is a great way for residents to explore the location of potential housing sites and the number of potential housing units on those identified sites. The responses received through this tool will be shared with the city council and help inform their decision on which sites

ultimately will be counted in the 6th Cycle Housing Element sites inventory.

The simulation tool allows users to create a housing plan by selecting housing sites and adjusting the number of housing units at each site. The goal is to create a complete housing plan that would accommodate at least 1,699 housing units (the city's required RHNA, plus buffer).

Once users have created a complete housing plan, submit the plan. The results from the simulation tool will be shared with the city council and inform development of the Housing Element.

<https://orinda.abalancingact.com/housing-simulation>

Orinda takes 25-year lease on Mini-Park, allowing landscaping to proceed

By Sora O'Doherty

The city of Orinda and Pacific Gas & Electric Co. have agreed to execute a new lease for the property known as the Crossroads Mini Park, located

on the corner of Camino Pablo and Brookwood Road. The new lease, which replaces the former 20-year lease, will run for 25 years and, if not previously renewed, will continue on a month-to-month basis. Orinda will not pay rent on the property, but agrees to allow PG&E to continue its use of the land, which holds a high-voltage electricity tower.

The city had put plans to landscape the park on hold in September 2020, because of the uncertainty of the lease status. The new lease provides that Orinda will prepare and seek approval from PG&E for activities to be performed on the property, including, the landscaping plan and improvement plan. The matter was approved on the

city's consent calendar on Dec. 14.

There has been for several years a plan to improve the aspect of the park, which many consider to be Orinda's front door, so to speak, and the Orinda Foundation has agreed to contribute funding for improvements to the park. The new lease specifies certain parameters that must be met by any improvements, and must be approved by PG&E prior to implementation. The staff report prepared by Parks and Rec Director Todd Trimble states that Orinda staff have begun working with an architect and have requested updated construction costs and a schedule for the design. The matter will return to the city council.

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www.ContraCostaRecycles.com
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City Council Regular Meeting:
 Tuesday, Jan. 11, 7 p.m. By Teleconference Only

Planning Commission
 TBA

Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission Regular Meeting
 Wed., Jan. 12, 6:30 p.m. By Teleconference Only