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New Administrative Services Director in Orinda knows he's got a hard act to follow



Douglas Alessio

Photo Sora O'Doherty

By Sora O'Doherty

New Administrative Services Director Douglas Alessio knows that he has a challenge to face, stepping into the shoes vacated by outgoing Director Paul Rankin, whom Alessio recognizes as having been well liked and well respected. But the veteran government employee enjoys a challenge, and is excited about his new job in Orinda.

Alessio most recently was assistant city manager in Livermore, a city of some 91,000 residents. Unlike Orinda, which contracts for police services and is part of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, Livermore is a full-service city handling the full complement of services, including water distribution, wastewater collection, police and fire services. Alessio was with Livermore for 12

years, starting as finance manager and serving as administrative services director before being promoted to assistant city manager. He dealt with issues similar to those Orinda faces, from storm drains to using goats for fire safety.

Born in New York, Alessio's family moved to Walnut Creek when he was 4 years old. He attended college at Cal State Hayward (as it was then). After graduating during a recession, he took a job with the Franchise Tax Board auditing people's tax returns. It didn't take him long to realize that this wasn't his ideal job.

After a year, he saw an ad in a newspaper for a job with a firm in Walnut Creek, where he grew up. He stopped by, intending to just submit his resume, but was immediately brought in and interviewed for three hours. The firm told him

that their clientele was mostly local governments. "I warned them that I had had only one lecture in school about local government," Alessio said, but they told him they would teach him. "I fell in love with the field. There is so much going on in local government about which the average person has no idea," Alessio noted, adding that he fell into this career and finds it to be the most interesting career someone can choose. He particularly likes local government because he finds it to be closer to the people and therefore more accountable about how it uses its resources.

Looking at Orinda, Alessio is impressed with the willingness of Orinda's residents to tax themselves for services that they want. "In Livermore," according to Alessio, residents refused to pay for services and amenities. But he thinks it is super cool that Orinda's residents are willing, and he believes that when residents are paying for services from the government it makes them more interested in government finances. "I love that," he said, "I think that is a healthy relationship when the residents want to make sure that the resources they are providing are being used as intended."

In Livermore Alessio was concerned that emergency preparedness and operations were not where they should be. "Four years ago, we brought in an emergency manager, who focused on training staff and developing a public safety

plan." Alessio observed that the city got to see the immediate benefits, as right after developing its safety plan the city had a cyber attack, PSPSs, a wildfire that almost made it into Livermore, and then COVID.

Alessio is excited that one of the things he is being tasked with in Orinda is the development of an IT master plan. "Any time you can leverage IT," he says, "you are leveraging your human resources to keep up with increasing service demands." He says that his passion is to help improve systems so that an organization can function efficiently.

Alessio knew Rankin, and knew that Orinda is a pretty

well put together organization. He views his new job as an opportunity to do something different, to help out a community with slightly less resources than in his previous job.

Another similarity that Alessio sees between Orinda and Livermore is the high level of education among residents. While Orinda is near UC Berkeley and has a lot of tech executives, Livermore has Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. The joke in Livermore local government, Alessio says, is "you don't have to be a rocket scientist to get on the city council, unless of course it's Livermore."

Orinda Theatre hosts a celebration for those who contributed



Photo provided

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda Theatre celebrated its 80th birthday on Dec. 27, with a free screening of the film, "Cinema Paradiso" for all who contributed to the theatre's GoFundMe effort to keep it in business during the pandemic. During the last two days of 2021, a generous donor matched all donations made to the theatre's fundraising effort.

Theatre owner Derek Zemrak extended an enthusiastic thank you to all who came to the 80th birthday celebration. Zemrak said it was a perfect film to celebrate the theatre's history and that it looked amazing on the theatre's new, state-of-the-art screen, recently installed in the theatre's historic 750-seat auditorium.

Zemrak thanked Greg King for restoring the mar-

quee and tower's neon lights to their glory days. Other upcoming improvements include a new screen and curtains in both the 174-seat auditorium and the 47-seat screening room. The new screen in the 174-seat theater will be larger than the current screen, which was installed in 1989. The 174-seat auditorium now has a larger stage to improve Live at Orinda Cabaret concerts. The floor in the 174-seat auditorium was recently painted and looks amazing, Zemrak said, and he is currently working with the premiere sound company in the world on getting a new sound system in the main theatre.

Upcoming live concerts include two-time Tony nominee Christine Andreas on Jan. 30, jazz & pop star Freda Payne on Feb. 20, 5-time Golden Globe nominee Marilu Henner on March 6, 12-

time MAC award winning cabaret star Natalie Douglas on April 3 and Tony Award winner Debbie Gravitte on May 1. The Orinda Theatre is observing all pandemic protocols, including checking vaccination cards and IDs for entrance.

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Single Family Home Customers – 2022 Holiday Tree Collection Schedule

Your tree pickup will be on the same day as your regular garbage service but by a separate truck. Regular service will not be affected for Christmas and New Year's Day because they fall on a Saturday.

Week of Jan 3-7	Customers in Walnut Creek, Danville, Alamo, Diablo, and Blackhawk (including unincorporated areas).
Week of Jan 10-14	Customers in Lafayette, Orinda, and Moraga (including unincorporated areas).
Week of Jan 17-21	Customers who missed prior tree collection.
AFTER Jan 21	If possible, cut tree and place in organics cart with lid closed, or call (925) 685-4711 to schedule a pick-up for a fee.

Tree Pickup Do's & Don'ts

- Do:**

 - Remove lights, ornaments, and tinsel before placing at curbside.
 - Trees over 8' must be cut in half.
- Don't:**

 - Flocked trees can be collected using your annual on-call garbage cleanup at no cost, but must be scheduled in advance. Call (925) 685-4711. If cut to fit inside with lid closed, flocked trees may be placed in your black landfill cart.
 - Do not leave stands (whether plastic, metal, or wood) on the tree. Trees with these items still attached cannot be picked up.

Leave trees at curbside on the same day as your regular collection day, during your city's assigned week.

COLLECTED TREES WILL BE COMPOSTED.

