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Orinda City Council glides through reorganization, mayor gives awards of excellence

By Sora O'Doherty



Council members Latika Malkani, Brandyn Iverson, Vice Mayor Darlene Gee, Mayor Inga Miller, and Council Member Janet Riley. Photo Sora O'Doherty

The reorganization of the Orinda City Council was smooth and easy, as new city council members Latika Malkani, Brandyn Iverson and Janet Riley were sworn into office and took their virtual seats at the council meeting on Dec. 13. Shortly thereafter, without deviating from custom, Vice Mayor Inga Miller was elected by the Council as the new Mayor and Darlene Gee stepped up to Vice Mayor. The new city council is the first to include only women council members in Orinda's history.

Malkani was the top vote getter, with 5,679 votes (23.56%), followed by Brandyn Iverson at 4,718 (19.58%) and Janet Riley at 4,561 (18.92%) according to official Contra Costa County results. The ranking is significant because, according to Orinda custom, it determines the order in which the rotating mayor and vice mayor serve.

Also at the meeting outgoing mayor Dennis Fay bestowed his Awards of Excellence to Jud Hammon for his work as chair of the Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission; to Derek Zemrak and Michael Williams for putting on Live at the Orinda Theatre, a program that brings live performances to Orinda; and to Maggie Boscoe for her work on Artify Orinda, a project that brings art to public spaces and utility boxes.

Praises and proclamations were also heaped upon the outgoing council members, Fay, Amy Worth and Nick Kosla. Katie Keeshen, speaking on behalf of Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, quoted the assembly member as saying, "I feel incredibly lucky to live in and represent Orinda. Orinda is special because of the people who serve," she added, concluding, "You are giants in this community and will continue to have Orinda in your hearts." Supervisor Candace Andersen presented proclamations from the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors to Fay and Kosla, saying that Kosla's "experience in development let the council see things from the other side." Andersen had already presented a county proclamation to Worth at a reception honoring her earlier in the month.

Worth, with 24 years of experience on the Orinda City Council, including a record-breaking five terms as mayor, had words of the highest praise for outgoing mayor Dennis Fay. She expressed her delight working with him on the city council, noting that he has so much knowledge of local government, following a career for the city of Oakland. Worth said that she had recruited him to work on the original Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Committee (CIOC). She credited him with helping Orinda go from a city with the worst roads in the Bay Area to the best. Miller said that Fay had accomplished his goals on the city council, including the development of a downtown plan and increased wildfire safety and environmental consciousness measures that, she added, will be his legacy. Gee, who worked with Fay on the CIOC, said that he had done a great job as mayor, despite some trepidation before taking the office.

Following the Zoom meeting, the city council members, new and old, were honored at an in-person reception at the Orinda Community Center.

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