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Orinda Recruits for Committees and Commissions

By *Andrea A. Firth*

While predictions for most job markets continue to be gloomy for 2011, the City of Orinda has a number of openings on its committees and commissions. These are volunteer positions that require only a part-time commitment; meetings are generally on a monthly basis. [See ad on this page]

"With a limited budget, we depend heavily on the volunteer work of our citizens to provide creative and thoughtful solutions to issues facing us as a city," says Mayor Victoria Smith, whose first post at City Hall was as a Planning Commissioner where she was able to apply her skills as a real estate attorney. "We are very fortunate in Orinda to have a great many residents with expertise in their professional lives that they can lend to the city," adds Smith, noting that each commission and committee has its own area of expertise and responsibility.

The City is particularly interested in resident volunteers with financial, recreational, planning/architectural, or artistic expertise, says Smith. For example, many parents in Orinda have been coaches for sports teams and others are avid landscapers and gardeners, and this experience is helpful to serving on the Parks and Recreation Commission. "We need architects and those with arborist, landscape or city planning experience to apply for the Planning Commission. On the Finance Advisory Commission we need individuals who are experienced with budgets and investment," she cites as other examples.

Commission and committee terms are three years long and members are limited to two terms, explains City Clerk Michele Olsen. There are no specific prerequisites for any of the committee and commission posts, says Olsen, but all appointees must complete a statement of economic interest. Potential conflicts will not necessarily preclude a resident from serving on a commission or committee but may identify the need for a commissioner or committee member to recuse him/herself from certain discussions and votes.

"The talent we have in this community is amazing, and we want to continue to tap into that," says Olsen, "We are looking for people who are excited to part of the public process." She encourages interested residents to go to the City's website to review the descriptions of the various commissions and committees and then complete the Statement of Interest form which should be submitted to the City Clerk by Friday, January 21st.

The City Council will hold a public meeting on Saturday, January 29th to interview all qualified candidates, and appointments will be made at that time.

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