

City Officials Set Up Shop at the Orinda Farmers' Market

By Sophie Braccini



Council Member Worth and Mayor Pro Tem Smith answer questions from Orinda citizen Woody Karp

Photo by Sophie Braccini

A new table made its appearance at the Orinda Farmers Market on Saturday August 4th. It wasn't a local farmer selling fruit and vegetables or a baker selling bread and pastries. There was nothing to be purchased at this new table, but rather information to be gathered and shared. This was the table of the Orinda City Council and Administration, who came to the market to meet and discuss issues with their constituency.

Victoria Smith, Orinda's Mayor Pro Tem, wanted to find another way to reach out to Orindans. She was struck by how many people come to the Farmer's Market every Saturday morning. So rather than waiting for members of the community to show up at Town Council Meetings, she proposed to meet them at the Market.

At the south end of the market (closest to the library), keeping cool under a green canopy, Victoria Smith and Council Member Amy Worth staffed the booth. The table was covered with documents provided by Town Clerk Michele Olsen: A big map of the Wilder Development (formally called Gateway Development), safety information of all types, local maps, local environmental programs such as food scrap recycling, and

"Grow It," a Contra Costa Clean Water Program booklet providing information about safe pest management.

Local residents stopped by to meet their representatives and ask questions. Many of them wanted to know the date of the new City Hall Open House (August 21st from 4 to 6PM). A resident who wished to stay anonymous inquired about a new senior housing development in the planning stage. Mayor Pro Tem Smith explained: "\$2.5 million has been provided by Wilder Development as part of Orinda's Affordable Housing ordinance. We are going to be able to develop senior housing units where the old library used to be, close to shopping and the new library. That will be a great alternative for our senior citizens when they have to leave their homes in the hills."

Another hot topic for residents in Orinda is the condition of the roads. After the failure of measures Q and E, residents are wondering what will be done to fix a problem that will not go away on its own. Responding to a resident who asked her why she thought the measures failed, Council Member Worth said: "Reaching the 2/3 threshold of a positive vote is pretty hard." She also added that an ad hoc commission

is working on proposing alternative financing options.

Maggie Reeves, an Orinda resident for many years, commented: "It's great to be able to meet our representatives face to face, and it is helpful too!" She left with a map of the bike trails of the area.

Victoria Smith is confident that this outreach will be beneficial to the open communication between elected officials and their electorate. As far as staffing the table for the rest of the Farmers Market season, she is not worried: Council Members and senior City Staff are all looking forward to "getting out" and meeting the residents.

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