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Orinda Hosts Contra Costa Mayors Conference

By Lucy Amaral



California State Senator Mark DeSaulnier and Orinda Mayor Victoria Smith at the Contra Costa County Mayors Conference, held in Orinda. The Senator presented a legislative update to conference attendees. Photo Lucy Amaral

The City of Orinda hosted mayors, council members and representatives from the Board of Supervisors from Contra Costa County as they gathered January 6 for their monthly Mayors Conference. The group meets regularly to discuss city issues and, this time, to make a number of committee appointments.

Newly elected council members and mayors were introduced including Council Member Dean Orr of Orinda, Mayor Carl Anduri of Lafayette, Mayor Karen Mendonca of Moraga and the City of Orinda's new mayor, Victoria Smith.

For this meeting, California State Senator Mark DeSaulnier was invited to present an overview of the upcoming state budget. After offering a brief background on how the budget is divided and where California falls with regards to the rest of the country, DeSaulnier pulled no punches about the next few fiscal years. He outline a tough financial future with the possibility of education being hit hard and a 'realignment' of some service responsibilities put back to the city and county level.

"There is not a lot of good news," said DeSaulnier. "But the good news is that we are at a point where we have to confront our problems. We have the opportunity (to create) good fiscal policies and to monitor the outcome."

The gathering also included appointments to several key committees including the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA), the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and the next chairperson for the 2011 Mayors Conference.

Hercules Mayor Ed Balico, citing family responsibilities and city challenges, withdrew his nomination to serve again on the CCTA. Balico has come under fire recently for financial and managerial issues regarding the running of the city of Hercules. The council accepted the withdrawal and moved the selection process to the next meeting allowing for other nominees to come forward. Balico would go on to resign as Mayor of Hercules at the January 11 Hercules City Council meeting.

LAFCO is a regulatory agency charged by the state to oversee (among other items) the boundaries of cities, town and Special Districts (such as the Moraga Orinda Fire District), as well as water and sewer districts to ensure orderly growth. Four mayors were nominated to fill a vacant seat, but during the meeting two withdrew their requests. During the required roll call of attending mayors, Lafayette Council member Don Tatzin received the most votes, defeating Oakley Mayor Jim Frazier.

Moraga Council Member and current Vice Chair of the Mayors Conference, Dave Trotter, was selected to serve as the 2011 Mayors Conference Chairperson.

The next Mayors Conference will be held February 3 in Richmond. Lafayette will host this conference in June of this year, and Moraga is scheduled to host in July.

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