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Experienced Mayor Amy Worth takes the helm in Orinda for 4th time

By Sora O'Doherty



Incoming Mayor Amy Worth Photo Sora O'Doherty

Amy Worth, elected to the Orinda City Council for five consecutive terms since 1998, took the reins as mayor for the fourth time on Dec. 5. Formerly known as "The Fourth Bore Mayor," as she presided over the opening of the new bore of the Caldecott Tunnel, Worth has also presided over discussions of downtown development, and looks forward to continuing that work, particularly in the face of the challenge presented by Senate Bill 35, which goes into effect Jan. 1. A bill designed to encourage cities to approve more affordable housing will, in theory, cause cities to lose some control over their planning process.

Looking back on her year as the "sinkhole" vice mayor, Worth said she was proud of how Orinda staff responded to community demands for information and did a really good job at communicating. In her upcoming term, staff will continue to work on the issues around the flooding caused by the storms and sinkhole, and navigating federal reimbursement of the \$3.5 million that Orinda had to advance for the sinkhole repairs. Worth noted that while the detours required to avoid the sinkhole had caused additional stress on other roads in the area, the repaving of some of those roads was brought forward

from the original schedule.

The mayor's priorities for this term include settling library funding for the future, making progress on Orinda's roads and drains, and continuing to keep Orinda financially prudent. Worth is proud of Orinda's record as a small city with limited funds of stewarding a balanced budget. She would also like to see greater emergency communication capabilities in the future.

Like most Orindans, Worth is excited by the concept of restoration of San Pablo Creek, and says that the city is working with property owners to see how that might be accomplished.

The mayor acknowledges that the issue of housing development is a difficult one, with many factors favoring differing concepts. However, she noted that some older residents find that their homes are now too big, and would like smaller homes closer to downtown. That, she suggested, would also allow their children with growing families to move back to Orinda, into those bigger family homes. Similarly, Worth sees that those who grew up in Orinda would like to be able to live in the community, but many find housing too expensive. She favors consensus, but acknowledges that the discussions are really complex. Also, she said, cities don't build housing; developers build housing. There is a real housing crisis in California, she said, and Orinda wants to have housing for those who work in the city, such as nurses, even doctors, teachers, and so on.

She doesn't see the possibility of a new city of "Lamorinda." As three separate entities, she says, Orinda, Lafayette and Moraga enjoy the best of both worlds: they cooperate closely on matters such as fire and transportation, but maintain three distinct voices, which gives them the stronger voice with three votes rather than one on regional issues.

Worth, who graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in history and obtained a master's degree in counseling from Cal State Hayward, has a keen interest in the historical development of Orinda. Worth's history of volunteering in Orinda began with the library, and she is an ardent supporter of that institution. Orinda has one of the oldest community libraries in Contra Costa County; it is jointly funded by the county and the city.

Worth grew up in Portland, Oregon, where her grandfather Edward Miller was the Managing Editor of The Oregonian newspaper. She met her husband Tom Worth at Cal and they settled in Oakland after marriage until moving to Orinda, where they raised their three daughters.

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