



Published December 9th, 2020

## Mayor's Award of Excellence goes to the Firewise Council

By Sora O'Doherty

Outgoing mayor Darlene Gee selected the Orinda Firewise Council for her Mayor's Award of Excellence as she completes her year leading the city council. "I selected the Orinda Firewise Council because they have had a significant and extremely positive impact on our community," Gee said, noting that "they raised awareness of the need for fire prevention and emergency preparedness at all levels, from our residents to the City Council."

According to Gee, the Firewise Council helped spur the formation of the Joint Fire Subcommittee of Orinda with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the town of Moraga. They also played an invaluable role in helping to pass Measure R, which will allow the city to advance critically needed actions to help prevent wildfires in Orinda. In addition, Gee said, "they have put forth extensive efforts at the state level with our elected officials and the State Insurance Commissioner to advocate for issues that affect Orinda." Gee concluded, "I felt the Firewise Council represented an exceptional level of volunteerism that is changing our city for the better and helping to protect our quality of life in Orinda."

The Firewise Council is a consortium of leaders from the Orinda Firewise groups who have come together to support each other by sharing resources and best practices and to engage the city of Orinda and MOFD in wildfire prevention. According to its web page, OFC was founded in February of 2020 in response to the "new normal" of a year-round wildfire season resulting from climate change and decades of unmitigated fuel buildup. OFC says that, driven by the enthusiastic support of neighbors, elected leaders and a visionary fire chief, they have quickly grown in size and influence. OFC committees are working to bring residents, the city of Orinda, firefighting professionals and neighboring communities together to make everyone safer from wildfire. OFC believes that no one is safe from a wildfire until everyone is safe from a wildfire. The indiscriminate nature of wildfire, OFC says, creates an interdependency, so that all landowners need to mitigate fuel on their property regardless of whether it's public, private or corporate.

The OFC Executive Committee includes Melanie Light, Chair, Barry Horn, Ken Light, Linda Landau, Michael Brown, Rachel Duclos and Sue Wecht. The membership committee includes liaison Joyce Arnon, Joan Lucas, Susan Anacker and Sue Wecht. The agency committee is chaired by Tim Lipman with Lucy Talbot.

Reach the reporter at: [sora@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sora@lamorindaweekly.com)

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