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Orinda Library Rotunda to be named in honor of former mayor Amy Worth

By Alison Burns

It is perhaps fitting that the Orinda Library rotunda is about to be named in honor of five-time mayor Amy Worth as she approaches retirement at the end of this year because, as one caller laughingly remarked at the city council's most recent meeting, "beyond Amy's love of her family, I think the library comes a close second . maybe even a little before the city of Orinda."

As Vice Mayor Inga Miller pointed out, when the time came to discuss the agenda item involving the library rotunda, the council was first asked to examine "the purpose of the naming policy and whether the current opportunity fit this policy."

After quoting the definition of the naming policy as being "a way to remember shared history and identify local natural resources and honor individuals who have contributed significantly to the city of Orinda," Miller concluded, "I think we can all agree that Council Member Worth has more than triple-done that."

Although Resolution 52-22, originally initiated by Mayor Dennis Fey and Council Member Darlene Gee, was overwhelmingly approved, Miller suggested that instead of calling it "The Amy Worth Library Rotunda," the somewhat irrelevant word, "library" should be removed "because, well, it's a library."

She also went on to say that because Worth "has made our city what it is," this is a really wonderful way to create intuitive use of this naming opportunity and proposed that perhaps the less formal words, "Amy's Place," could also be incorporated.

Mayor Fey agreed, and suggested that if both phrases were used on the rotunda, front and back. "You'd read the words Amy Worth Rotunda as you're walking in and Amy's Place as you're walking out," he said. When consulted, City Attorney Osa Wolff advised that there was flexibility for city staff to work with the Friends of the Orinda Library to come up with the actual wording for the signage, although City Manager David Biggs asked for the final decision to be made as soon as possible as his department needed to order the necessary materials within the coming week, in order to have the work done in time for the official unveiling ceremony planned for Dec. 4.

Gee added that she was happy that the council had the opportunity to name something that was so obviously significant to Worth because "everyone will enjoy it for many years to come, recognizing your great value to both Orinda and our library."

But the final word went to Worth, now contemplating the bittersweet prospect of retirement after an unbroken record of almost a quarter century on Orinda's City Council. She was visibly touched by the honor, joy and privilege of being recognized in this way and spoke of being taken to the library every week by a mother who taught her about community service, and how, on moving to Orinda, her first volunteer job was with the Friends of the Orinda Library, as publicity chair for the Book Fair.

From such small beginnings, Worth became deeply involved in building Orinda's present library and regards her leadership in this area as one of her most significant accomplishments. The Friends, which was formed in the 1950s, own the physical building, while the city of Orinda owns the land, and the library - the only Friends-owned library in the county - is operated by the Contra Costa County Library system.

Carol Brown, a longtime Friends of the Orinda Library stalwart, quite simply calls Worth "a gift to our community," because championing the Orinda Library is not the only remarkable achievement for which we should all be grateful to Council Member Worth.

"Each time I drive west through the fourth bore of the Caldecott tunnel", says Brown, "I actually whisper, 'Thank you, Amy.'"

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