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Downtown Development Subcommittee gets ready for action on Streetscape Master Plan

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda residents have a lot of ideas about how the upcoming Streetscape Master Plan should be researched – so much so that the Downtown Development Subcommittee of the city council vowed to hold its next meeting in a bigger room. Associate Planner Adam Foster, Planning Director Drum-

mond Buckley, and Victoria Eisen of Eisen Letunic, the firm contracted to complete the Streetscape Master Plan, joined subcommittee members Vice Mayor Inga Miller and Council Member Eve Phillips for the meeting.

The first subject for discussion was the planned interviews with

stakeholder groups. Planning has a list of 15 groups, updated from the previous interviews with the Urban Land Institute on downtown development. What is envisioned is a five-hour “speed-dating” session, in which 15-minute interviews will be held with each stakeholder group, with a five-minute break be-

tween each group. Before the interviews, each group will be asked to respond to a questionnaire, so that interviews can be very specific.

Timing was an issue, and after some discussion, it was decided that it would be best to hold all the interviews the same day, but start in the afternoon so that the process

will run over into the evening to accommodate any groups that might be unable to appear during the day. Eisen fielded questions: Do you have to be there? “No, there will be other public events and lots of other ways to chime in,” she said.

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Changes at Orinda Chamber of Commerce and Lamorinda Weekly

By Sora O'Doherty



Sophie Braccini

Photo Andy Scheck

After serving as the executive director of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce for the past two and a half years, Sophie Braccini

is leaving to take up a position with UC Berkeley. Braccini, who has been a staff writer for Lamorinda Weekly since its beginning 11 years ago, will leave her duties as civic reporter for Moraga, but will continue to contribute occasional feature stories about life in Lamorinda.

Prior to 2007, Braccini worked in translation, localization and functionality on technical brochures, games, and computer applications, making sure that translations into French were not only literally correct, but culturally appropriate as well. She and her husband raised a son and two daughters, all Campolindo graduates.

“Both jobs had a deep impact on my life. I’ve met so many diverse and wonderful people,” Braccini explained. “I knew some business people because of the stories I wrote for the paper,” she continued, “but I now have increased respect for business owners and the challenges they face every day.”

The executive director position is the only paid position at the chamber, and its role is to make businesses more visible.

Braccini enjoyed building relationships with other entities, such as Rotary, the Orinda Association, and the Orinda Community Foundation. She particularly enjoyed her role as an advocate to the city

of Orinda, and working with City Manager Steve Salomon, whom she describes as “an individual of great quality.”

“As a resident of Orinda, I appreciate the time that (Sophie) spent keeping residents informed about everything that is going on in our cities/towns, and I have especially always enjoyed (her) coverage of the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority and all things concerning recycle/reuse and garbage,” said former Orinda Mayor Victoria Smith. “As a member of the Chamber, I thank (her) for all that (she) has done to make our community vibrant and informed, and to really

build a sense of community in Orinda.”

Orinda Chamber President Roy Hodgkinson said that Braccini “has expanded the services to our Chamber member businesses, their owners, staff, and families with initiatives such as the Non-profit Forum, Senior Health Fair, and through her strong relationships with the city of Orinda.”

While Braccini notes that she will miss her job and the people she’s been interacting with, she is excited to try something new. Anyone interested in the job of executive director should contact Hodgkinson at president@orindachamber.org for more information.

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