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Outgoing and incoming Orinda Books owners honored by city council

By Sora O'Doherty



New owner of Orinda Books, Pat Rudebusch, center, at city council meeting. Photo Sora O'Doherty

Council member Amy Worth noted that Orinda Books is a bookstore that grew out of a book room. "I have loved the cooking program, the cultural programs," she said, and credited Roden with creating a great spirit. "Pat," she said, addressing Rudebusch, "as a former member of the Orinda Union School District, you understand the importance of books," and Worth offered her a "deep, deep thank you" for taking over the shop. To Vice Mayor Darlene Gee's hope that "we'll see more of the family working there," Rudebusch exclaimed, "Well, you will see Catherine! " Catherine is Rudebusch's daughter.

"It was a hard decision," Rudebusch said, "but my eldest daughter said, `Mom! You have to - it's my childhood bookstore,'" and that, in addition to some careful analysis and thought, convinced her. "Maria had a professional, objective valuation of the business," Rudebusch said.

"Since I worked here for three years, I know the business and I'm comfortable," she said, but added, "I'm not looking for a great return on investment; I'm primarily motivated to keep a bookstore alive and thriving here in Orinda."

Rudebusch, who grew up and went to college in Chicago and in the past worked for the Public Broadcasting System, describes herself as a habitual volunteer at schools. She has worked at Orinda Books for the past three years, and before that was a frequent customer. She plans to continue what Roden has started. "Maria has built it into a thriving business and community, with author events, and artists of the month," she said. "I want to keep doing what Maria put in place but also to evolve in response to community values, to keep up with changes, I don't want to be static," she added. She wants to keep the life and excitement that Maria injected into the store. For example, she wants to try to bring in more artists. Currently Gerry Wallace ceramics are featured at the shop.

"Orinda Books has worked, it has thrived in Orinda," Rudebusch notes. She attributes this to loyal customers who value local business, who understand that if you want to have local business downtown you have to support it. "They get it. Plus, I enjoy working here."

The new owner will keep current staff, who are all great at what they do, she says. The store has a staff of about 12, including some high school students who work part time. "Everyone who works here is local to the community," Rudebusch says. "Many have been with the shop for over 30 years. We want to keep that going. Such a wealth of knowledge. They know what customers like to read." She confessed to being "a little bit nervous." But she said, "I'm following in some pretty accomplished footsteps and everybody on staff is excited. I'm excited, customers are excited." Rudebusch officially takes over Oct. 1. She and her husband, Glenn, were welcomed aboard with a party at the shop on Sept. 14.

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