

## Orinda Seeks Ways to Increase Revenues

By Emily Schultheis

Orinda, like its sister cities Lafayette and Moraga, faces the significant challenge of fixing a decaying infrastructure system, i.e. the roads, and finding the resources to make this happen. To that end, the City Council established a Revenue Enhancement Task Force to help identify ways to raise additional funds for infrastructure projects. The Task Force recently sought the advice of Michael Coleman, the principal fiscal policy advisor for the League of California Cities, who knows how to make this process a little less difficult.

Coleman presented his ideas and took questions from community members on revenue enhancement at a special session of the Orinda City Council on July 10 at the Orinda Library.

Coleman stated that due to the current economic climate, revenues from both sales taxes and property taxes—the two top sources of general-purpose revenues—have both declined, a

trend that is affecting cities across the state.

In addition, because there is “not a whole lot of city money in the state general fund,” Coleman said cities shoulder much of the costs for services necessary to keep cities running, like police and fire departments, infrastructure and parks, through their own means.



“There are no easy answers,” stated Coleman. He stressed the complexity of the situation and outlined several steps cities like Orinda can take to increase revenues.

Coleman cited additional

taxes like a transportation sales tax on BART and an add-on sales tax as possible revenue sources for the City of Orinda. He added that while it is important to find new sources of revenue, cities should also work to set priorities and work within their means, whatever those may be.

When asked by a community member if the proposition of an add-on tax would be supported by city residents in a time of economic downturn, Coleman acknowledged the difficulty of the situation, but said that reaching out to people as early on as possible would make the process easier.

In follow up to Coleman’s presentation, Mayor Pro Tem Sue Severson, a member of the Revenue Enhancement Task Force, reported to the City Council that the Task Force has reviewed an initial draft of a report regarding ways to increase Orinda’s revenues and that the final report will likely be submitted in early October.

*Andrea A. Firth contributed to this article*