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## Possible Bumpy Ride for Orinda Revenue Enhancement

By Cathy Tyson

Although the goal of the evening was to develop an action plan to follow up on the Revenue Enhancement Task Force Report, it was easy to see that although the City Council prefers a collegial, amicable discussion, this has the potential to get ugly.

At issue is finding the money to address Orinda's estimated \$120 million dollar infrastructure problem. Over the next ten years, it's projected that road repair will cost \$80M, storm drains \$12M and water pipes \$28M. How to fund this is the \$120M dollar question. The Revenue Enhancement Task Force (RETF) identified the City of Orinda and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) property tax allocation as viable sources of revenue. Understandably the MOFD is not thrilled about potential cuts, calling the Task Force recommendations flawed, incomplete and based on incorrect assumptions at a prior meeting.

In an effort to smooth ruffled feathers, Orinda Mayor Sue Severson said, "I agree, this is an urgent issue," and added that the Council wants "an open, cooperative, positive public debate."

"There can't be a turf war here. Drawing a line in the sand is totally inappropriate," noted Bill Judge. "You recognize by now that this is going to be a big job," added Bill Schmicker, a member of the Task Force, "Ultimately it will come down to the City Council having the courage to push this through."

Looking for consensus, Steve Glazer referred to the suggested action items, "Of the list of nine items I think seven of those we could move forward on right away." He also encouraged fellow Council Members to consider the difference between a perfect solution versus an achievable solution. "We have got to get pragmatic real quick."

In the end the Council agreed to disband the RETF and decided that the remainder of the Task Force's recommendations will be reviewed by staff and assigned to staff or existing city committees such as the Finance Advisory Committee and Citizen Infrastructure Oversight Commission for further research and next steps. Other key sources of revenue identified by the Task Force in their extensive report include current pavement and storm drainage management programs which are projected to yield \$15M over 12 years; road matching funds from County, State and Federal grants which the City already aggressively seeks and which would generate about \$2M over 12 years; securitizing the gas tax revenue with a one time yield of \$5M; drawing down the City reserves (\$2M one time); and a tax revenue package (a bond measure currently estimated to be about \$25-\$30 M).

The Council also planned to establish a subcommittee of two Council members to coordinate with MOFD and the Town of Moraga on further investigations of the Task Force's recommendation regarding property tax reallocation.

Council Member Tom McCormick summed up the situation, "What's bothering me most - is a group of bright, hard working citizens have come up with a somewhat disturbing report - the only way to deal with this is to just deal with it."

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

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