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Orinda Capital Improvement Expenditures on the Rise and Fall

By Andrea A. Firth

The Orinda City Council recently adopted a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) allocating approximately \$4.6 million dollars in each of the next two fiscal years to fund infrastructure projects—a significant increase over the projected \$2.9 million spent last year. "The CIP for 2010 represents a significant investment in the city's infrastructure," stated City Manager Janet Keeter. The bump in funding comes primarily from an increase in park dedication fees associated with the Pulte development (almost \$1 million over two years), a federal economic stimulus grant, and several state grants.

Although the city's infrastructure budget appears flush in the short-term, the longer-term forecast for infrastructure improvements is less optimistic with less than half as much funding available in 2012 (about \$2 million) and 2013 (just over \$2.6 million).

The CIP is a five-year spending plan for infrastructure projects that includes repaving roads, installing storms drains, replacing bridges, stabilizing hillsides, building walkways, and improving park facilities. "The CIP is adopted annually and emphasizes project planning," states Janice Carey, Orinda's City Engineer. "At any given phase, Council has the opportunity to re-evaluate whether or not to proceed with a project given cost escalations, changing priorities, or funding challenges," Carey adds.

Road improvement represents the biggest spending category with over \$2.7 million allocated to rehabilitate Orinda's notorious roads in 2010. However, the funds allocated for road projects will decline significantly over the next three years to \$1.35 million in 2011 and about \$750,000 per year in 2012 and 2013. "The amount spent in future years reflects the decision not to add any funds from the city's general fund due to expected reductions in revenue," explains Carey.

With the city's adoption of a lean two-year operating budget that includes spending cuts and potential furloughs for city employees, the increased capital improvement expenditures may seem incongruous. However, many of the funding sources included in the capital improvement plan are restricted for use toward infrastructure improvements, notes Orinda's Director of Public Works and Engineering Chuck Swanson. "It's easy to make the decision to defer spending related to infrastructure maintenance in this economic environment" adds Swanson, "but we have got to stay ahead and not lose more ground on the city's infrastructure."

Infrastructure Projects—A Brief Update

By A. Firth

Orinda's capital Improvement Plan for 2009-1013 outlines 35 infrastructure, general community, and park improvement projects to be addressed over the next five years. Here's a brief update on a few.

Undergrounding of the Utilities on Miner Road

PG &E has indicated that it will delay the burying of the electrical utility wires along Miner Road for up to a year due to lack of funds, according to Chuck Swanson, Orinda's Director of Public Works and Engineering. This delay will impact completion of the Miner Road repavement project and the start of design and construction of the pedestrian pathway. Swanson plans to follow up with PG&E within a month before final decisions are made on how to proceed.

Charles Hill/Honey Hill/Miner Repavement Rehabilitation

This project was funded as part of the Economic Stimulus bill and has received approval from the Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans. The project is currently being advertised, and the bid opening date is July 8th.

Glorietta Storm Drain

A total of \$1,185,00 has been allocated for the construction of a new storm drain underneath Glorietta Boulevard extending to the back of Glorietta Court. According to the city's settlement with

the homeowner (Robles v. Orinda), the city will purchase #102 Glorietta Boulevard by 2012 at which point the collapsing storm drain will be repaired. The planning and design phase of the project will be initiated in 2010 in coordination with the city staff and Council.

Manzanita Drive Bridge Replacement

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has recently determined that this bridge replacement project will adversely affect the California red-legged frog and the Alameda whipsnake according to City Engineer Janice Carey. "The city is waiting for a Biological Opinion from the Fish & Wildlife Service before taking any further action on this project," states Carey.

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