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Orinda Establishes Strategic Funding Subcommittee

By Andrea A. Firth

Lately in Orinda it seems that most discussions in the civic arena, no matter how they start, come back to the dismal state of the roads and how to pay to get them fixed. At its September 1st meeting, the City Council discussed a proposal to create a Council Subcommittee to address community communication and outreach regarding city funding issues, revenue enhancement, and potential bond measures for the 2010 ballot. Despite the wordy agenda item title, exactly what the subcommittee represented and was to do was not clear to both residents in attendance and some members of the Council. Council Member Steve Glazer, who had worked with staff to craft the proposal, explained that he saw the subcommittee's role as moving the recommendations of the Revenue Enhancement Task Force through the system. "Things have stalled," said Glazer. "It's all about actively moving these things along," he added. Vice Mayor Tom McCormick advocated for the subcommittee's charge to be broadened and wanted to ensure that the subcommittee looked to options beyond a bond measure. "I see this as gathering information to address the infrastructure problem," said McCormick. "I want everyone in the community to have input on how we raise money. It needs to be inclusive." During the public comment segment of the discussion, two members of the citizen's group F.A.I.R. (Fire and Infrastructure Renewal), Steve Cohn and Art Haigh, addressed the Council stating that their group had been working aggressively on a plan to address the financing of the city's infrastructure needs, and that they planned to make a presentation by mid-October to early November. Former mayor Bill Judge also spoke and encouraged the Council to again look at the MOFD funding inequity issue raised by the Revenue Enhancement Task Force (RETF) report from 2008 before moving forward on a bond measure. "It's gotten a lot of attention. It has raised concerns in the community. If people have a reason, relevant or not, to vote against a bond measure, they will," stated Judge. After a lengthy and sometimes circular discussion, the Council agreed to retitle the subcommittee as the Strategic Funding Subcommittee and appointed Council Members Glazer and Amy Worth to serve on it. They are charged to work with staff and the community on communications regarding the funding of critical city services, advance the progress on consideration of the RETF recommendations, develop a draft public opinion survey, and provide advice on funding options including potential ballot measures.

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