


# Civic News

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# Orinda

**Public Meetings**

**City Council** Tuesday, January 5, 7:00 pm  
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

**Planning Commission** Tuesday, January 12, 7:00 pm  
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

**Art in Public Places Committee** Monday, January 4, 3:30 pm  
May Room, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

**Mayor's Community Liaison Meeting** Monday, January 4, 8:15 am  
Community Room, City Hall, 22 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
 City of Orinda: [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org)  
 Chamber of Commerce: [www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org)

**Orinda City offices, except police, are closed 12/24 and 12/25, and 12/28 through 12/31.**

• **Police Report** •



**D.U.I., 12/12/09** Police noticed a car weaving between three lanes on eastbound Highway 24 prior to St. Stephens at 2:50 in the morning. Once the officer flashed his lights, the driver veered into the center divide slightly, striking the median before eventually pulling off the highway. Driver had a blood alcohol level of .163 and was taking hydrocodone for an injury. Label on the hydrocodone prescription bottle noted: do not take this with alcohol. Bad combination that could have killed someone.

**Residential burglary, 12/03/09** An unknown suspect opened an unlocked car parked in front of a Via Hermosa residence and took several undisclosed items. The unknown suspect then opened an unlocked sliding glass door to the living room of the home and took several more items. The homeowner discovered the missing items in the morning as he was getting ready for work. Estimated loss \$1648. Two for two.

Although the "Avoid the 25" drunk driving crackdown started Friday, December 18, five drunk driving arrests were made on the weekend of December 5 - 6. One of the drivers happened to be four months pregnant, had an open container in the vehicle and was driving on a suspended license. The goal of the "Avoid the 25" crackdown, which runs through January 3, is to reduce or hopefully eliminate D.U.I. fatalities. Extra patrols will be on duty looking specifically for drunk drivers. At D.U.I. checkpoints all passing cars will be checked to verify that the driver is licensed and sober.

**Senior robbery, 12/08/09** Around lunchtime a 74-year-old suspect walked into BevMo and swiped two bottles of whiskey and two cans of Sapporo beer. Apparently his beverage of choice is a Boilermaker. As a store clerk attempted to stop him, the elderly gentleman ran into the clerk's chest almost knocking him to the ground. Suspect was eventually apprehended at Orinda BART.

**Use Orinda's New Pharmaceutical Disposal Collection Box**

Orinda residents can safely dispose of their unwanted or outdated medications in the new pharmaceutical disposal collection box located at City Hall in the upper level lobby. In addition to the disposal collection box, a green plastic recycling bin is available for recycling empty plastic pill bottles. Unwanted pharmaceuticals can be dropped off during normal business hours, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

## Orinda Roads—Council Tackles How to Fund a \$73 Million Fix

By Andrea A. Firth

To bring Orinda's road system to optimum condition has an estimated five-year price tag of \$73 million according to the City's Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission (CIOC).

At the December 15th City Council meeting the CIOC, a seven-member commission comprised of residents with engineering and public works expertise, presented five alternative plans for rehabilitating the City's road and drainage systems. The CIOC's strong preference was that the City pursues a plan to return all of Orinda's roads to good condition. Continuing to maintain the roads at current spending levels, about \$2 million per year, will leave the residential streets, which represent 68% of all of Orinda's roadways, to turn to gravel according to one CIOC member.

Less expensive, middle-of-the road alternatives, with five-year costs between \$31 and \$38 million, were only minimally acceptable according to the CIOC. These plans would maintain the most traveled streets in the City at

an optimum condition and prevent further deterioration of residential roads as a whole, but many residential streets would be left at substandard levels.

*The Total Cost?* Earlier gross estimates of the cost to repair Orinda's aging road infrastructure, as presented by the City's Revenue Enhancement Task Force last year, have been as high as \$120 million. Not included in the CIOC's road repair plan is the cost to upgrade water pipes that run under the roads, which the Commission concluded were owned by and the financial responsibility of the East Bay Municipal Utility District. Residents Art Haigh and Steve Cohn strongly encouraged the City Council to factor the water pipes into the road repair mix noting that the upgrades were necessary and much more cost-effectively done during road repair.

The CIOC also identified the ongoing maintenance costs associated with keeping Orinda's roads in optimum condition, which ranged from \$2 million to

\$3 million annually for the preferred and mid-range infrastructure management options.

*How to Fund It.* The goal of the CIOC report was to identify for the Council a reasonable range of options to manage the City's infrastructure. Where the CIOC left off and the City's Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) stepped in was with how to pay for the infrastructure plan. Carol Penskar, Chair of the FAC, presented an updated report of revenue options, and the Council engaged in a discussion of what tax or combination of taxes would be most palatable to Orinda residents. The Council voted to hire a public opinion research strategy firm, FM3, to develop and implement a community phone poll to assess the residents' views about the infrastructure problem and how best to fund fixing it. A draft of the poll questionnaire regarding infrastructure plan options and funding will be presented at the next City Council meeting on January 5th.

*The F.A.I.R. Option.* Early in the course of the December 15th

Council meeting, residents Art Haigh and Steve Cohn, members of the citizen group F.A.I.R. (Fire and Infrastructure Renewal), requested the Council hear a presentation from their organization. "Our presentation is about taking control of our property taxes. We want to show you how Orinda can generate \$65 million over the next 12 years without compromising emergency services," said Haigh. "The substance is relevant and important in light of the new taxes being proposed," he added.

F.A.I.R. contends that the Moraga Orinda Fire District can be run more cost efficiently and proposes that a portion of the MOFD property tax revenues can then be redirected to address Orinda's crumbling roads, storm drains, and water delivery system. MOFD Chief Randy Bradley was also in attendance and indicated to the City Council that the department encouraged a presentation. F.A.I.R. will give a Power Point presentation at the City Council's next meeting on January 5th.

## Orinda Evaluates Police Service Options

By Andrea A. Firth

By many measures, Orinda receives high-level police services from the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office (CCCSO). The City's \$3.9 million contract for law enforcement services from the CCCSO represents 35% of the City's \$11 million budget. The multi-million dollar question facing the City Council is whether the cost of the CCCSO contract, which is expected to increase significantly over the next several years, is sustainable. To identify options to address this fiscal dilemma, Orinda, along with the cities of Danville and Lafayette, commissioned the Matrix Consulting Group to conduct a po-

lice services study, which was outlined to the City Council at a public workshop on December 7th.

Going forward, the total cost of the CCCSO contract is expected to increase considerably due to rising retirement benefit expenses, but by how much is unclear. The City has received conflicting information on cost projections for retirement benefits. "We won't know exactly what next year's [CCCSO contract] retirement costs until January of 2010," stated City Manager Janet Keeter.

Local agencies across the State are wrestling with how to

manage the escalating costs of funding public employee pension benefit programs, and some estimates project pension costs will double in the next five years.

Orinda resident Carol Penskar, who serves as the Chair of the City's Finance Advisory Committee, pointed out that, even with the unknowns, in the next fiscal year the City will pay more in retirement benefits to the CCCSO than in salaries for the 14 sworn officers dedicated to Orinda. Given the widespread challenge posed by rising public agency pension costs statewide, Keeter said she expected some sort of pension reform measure to be placed before voters in November.

Orinda's current cost per resident for police services, a budgeted cost of \$212 annually, falls in the mid-range as compared to other local communities according to the Matrix report. Compared to its neighbors, Orinda is on the high end. In Lafayette, which also contracts with the CCCSO but has a larger population, the annual per resident cost for police services is

\$158. In Moraga, which has its own police department and a similar number of residents, police services cost about \$137 a head.

Matrix evaluated the cost of Orinda maintaining its contract with CCCSO over the next five years as compared to five alternative police services delivery options. With the rising costs of the County's retirement benefit structure, Matrix concluded that staying with the CCCSO might not be economically viable for the City. Matrix recommended that Orinda further explore the formation of an Orinda Police Department or a partnership with Lafayette and/or Moraga. Projected cost estimates for these alternatives were lower than maintaining the CCCSO contract, however, the creation of a new police department in Orinda or in combination with another municipality would include a number of start-up costs as well.

The City Council has planned a follow up workshop to further discuss the police services study on February 3rd at 6:00 p.m.



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