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Orinda Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council
Tuesday, April 12, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission
Tuesday, April 12, 7:00 pm
Founder's Auditorium Community
Center, 28 Orinda Way

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission
Wednesday, April 13, 6:30pm
Community Room, City Hall
22 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Orinda:
www.cityoforinda.org
Chamber of Commerce:
www.orindachamber.org
The Orinda Association:
www.orindaassociation.org

City Reviews Budget

By Andrea A. Firth

Orinda's City Council has begun the process of reviewing the City's biennial budget plan, starting with an evaluation of projected revenues, and it looks like lean years ahead. Orinda's General Fund revenues, just under \$10 million, are estimated to increase a modest 1.7% a year over the next two years.

Revenues
Property tax revenue, which represents approximately 40% of Orinda's income, is projected to decline .25% this year—the first decline in property tax revenue that the City has experienced in memory according to Finance Director Emily Hobdy. Orinda typically sees a 6% to 7% increase in property tax revenue from year to year. Overall, property tax revenues for Contra Costa County are estimated to decline by 3.3% this year due to the poorly performing real estate market in East Bay cities.

The City's lease and interest income has also taken a hit in the past year. The City lost its tenant for 2,000 square feet of office space on the first floor of City Hall and is currently seeking a government or not-for-profit organization to rent the space. Interest income is down following the required sale of some investments in order to comply with the City's new investment policy.

On the plus side of the balance sheet, building inspection fees are predicted to increase by 5% a year due to activity at the Wilder development, and planning fees could also increase in fiscal year 2013 as plans move forward on the Pulte development. As the budgeting process continues, Council members Dean Orr and Steve Glazer indicated they would prefer the City take a more conservative approach to these projections.

Special Budget Requests

The City Council was also presented with several requests to fund special projects including the downtown planning process and General Plan update and a traffic study for Moraga Way. The Council made no decisions regarding the special budget requests. "We need more information on the Moraga traffic study," said Mayor Victoria Smith adding, "The requests are otherwise meritorious, but will have to be balanced." Glazer questioned the need for the Moraga Way traffic study, which has an estimated cost of \$60,000, when the City had already conducted a traffic study of Moraga Way in 2001. "What justifies the expense if the study is less than ten years old," said Glazer. He also expressed skepticism regarding further funding of the downtown planning process, which he feels does not have uniform support among residents.

What about the Roads?
Richard Nelson, Chairman of the Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Committee (CIOC), reminded the Council of the CIOC's recommendation that the budget for the City's road repairs should be increased by an additional \$1 to \$2 million annually to avoid further deterioration of the City's residential streets. "It's a tall order," acknowledged Nelson adding, "but you have got to start saying no." Nelson indicated that the special funding requests outlined were one place where the Council could say no and potentially channel these limited monies back to the roads program. Nelson also suggested that the City designate any growth in property tax, over what is projected, to infrastructure projects. "If the Council shows it is finding ways to increase road spending, then the public will be more willing to support a measure."

Quick Change at the Orinda Theater

... continued from page A1



The theater's marquee went blank last Thursday Photo Ohlen Alexander

This is not the Orinda Theater's first near death experience, and the previous theater management team had been in place for just two years. But Zemrak, who is also an independent filmmaker, confidently optimistic about turning the historic, art deco theater around. "It all comes down to programming. The key is to program the right films for the market," says Zemrak adding that tickets sales at the New Rheem Theater have risen 63% since the CAIFF Association took over the operation.


Zemrak and his colleagues are not completely new to Orinda's movie scene. The California Independent Film Festival was held at the Orinda Theater in 2010 after moving from Livermore, and then moved to the Rheem Theater in January of this year. He acknowledges the fact that the two theaters will no longer be in competition is another benefit to the new set up.

"There was a great energy there [Friday] night. We're really happy to welcome them back to the Orinda and are looking forward to continuing our excellent relationship," says Orinda resident Laura Abrams, who is a founding member of the Lamorinda Film & Entertainment Foundation (LFEF)—a nonprofit organization that has worked to pre-

serve the legacy of the Orinda for several years and supports some of the theater's other entertainment options such as the Orinda Idol competition and the recently launched International Film Showcase.

Hosting special events at the theater is important to the community and to the success of the theater, according to Zemrak. "Our track record shows that we work well with the community. We still want continue to explore and support these types of events." Currently, there are no plans to change the venue for the California Independent Film Festival says Zemrak, noting the tremendous success and support the CAIFF experienced in Moraga.

"Having seven screens is a great plus for the Lamorinda area. It provides us with great flexibility, so we can give people movie options," says Zemrak as he monitors the scene from the lobby of the Orinda Theater on a rainy Saturday afternoon and calls in to see how things are going at the New Rheem Theater. "There are about 40 people [at the Orinda] now, and there are 300 people over at Rheem," says Zemrak, "In a year, both theaters will be booming. We have a model that works for both theaters. It's only going to improve both venues."



Police Report

Home burglary, 3/22/11 A clever thief entered a home on Oak Road via the crawl space underneath the home. He must have left above ground because along with jewelry and checks he had a couple of TVs.

Car briefly stolen, 3/13/11 A maroon Chevy Tahoe was parked at McDonnell Nursery and left unlocked with the key left behind on the floorboard. When the owner returned to the car around lunchtime the vehicle had vanished. On Star was called and the would-be thief decided to just park the car on Moraga Via, where the cops found it unoccupied.

Burglary, 3/10/11 Lucky thieves got away – at least for now – with \$13,825 worth of merchandise, jewelry, laptops and a 42" television from a Claremont Avenue home. Suspect(s) entered via breaking the front door. Oddly enough, an alarm company alerted authorities to the crime. A little late to the party.

Drunk in Public, 3/09/11 A middle aged white man was observed by police sitting on a sidewalk near Camino Pablo with a beer can next to him. Upon noticing the police eye-balling him, the gentleman decided to walk toward the BART station. The pair got a proper introduction on the platform of the BART station, where it was determined the fellow was indeed drunk. Arrest ensued.

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