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## Letters to the Editor

Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. email: [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com); Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

**Editor:**  
 As an avid reader and loyal Lamorinda Weekly fan, I was thrilled to see your article saluting local authors (July 20 Local Authors Fill Shelves at Orinda Books.) The more I read the more surprised I was to not see the name of Cynthia Brian. Her column Digging Deep Gardening by Cynthia Brian is one of the reasons I buy your excellent weekly! Her recently published book "Be the Star You Are" is well written and heart warming with tales of family solidarity, honesty and yes, tears. I would have that book as a reading book in schools. I work in Lamorinda and live on the other side of the tunnel and really appreciate the quality of your weekly. Thank you for publishing such a friendly read and look forward to more news from your local treasure, Cynthia Brian. Yours sincerely, Jillian Morrissey

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## Public Forum JOIN IT

### The Grim Picture

Orinda, known for its beautiful scenic hills, its excellent schools, its small town semi-rural feel, and its great weather is increasingly known for terrible roads. The 2011 Metropolitan Transportation Commission Pothole report listed Orinda's roads among the worst in the entire Bay Area. The estimated total cost to bring the roads up to an optimal paving condition index is over \$50 Million! Unfortunately, just maintaining the current dilapidated state and preventing further deterioration of the roads will still cost at least \$2.1 Million per year. For a city with a total budget of about \$10 million per year and almost completely dependent on property tax dollars, how does the City tackle the cost of fixing the roads?

The roads issue in Orinda has been an ongoing battle since the City incorporated in 1985. At that time the 92 miles of roads the City inherited were already deteriorating in part due to our hilly terrain and clay-like soil. Under the rating system (Pavement Condition Index, PCI) used in the Bay Area our systemwide PCI is 49 (100 max) which puts the overall system in the poor category. Each year the City sets aside all its gas tax, county transportation return to source funds and garbage franchise fees, about 25% of its discretionary budget, to roads and seeks thousands in grant funding; unfortunately this is never enough and each year the City falls short of finding the money to address this problem.

In light of its ongoing budget constraints the City adopted the Pavement Management Plan Program that includes established criteria for selecting streets for repairs that is open and transparent and includes review and recommendations by the Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission. In 2011 this program spent \$1.1 Million on various roads throughout the City. The 2011 list included portions of Lombardy Lane, E. Altarinda Drive at St. Stephens road to Orindawoods Dive, a small segment of Camino Sobrante, Tara Road at Southwood Drive to Nonie Road, Valley View Drive at Moraga Way to Crestview Drive and Coral Drive at Ivy Drive to Eastwood.

Chairing the Commission that oversees road repair funding decisions for Orinda is one of the worst volunteer jobs you could ever imagine as I regularly get to tell my fellow Orinda citizens that as bad as their road is there's probably one worse and that under our current funding we will most likely never fix their residential roads. It's not what I want to be known for and it's not what a city like ours should accept, but it's the reality under current funding. In the meantime, I'm looking for a four wheel drive convertible so that I can enjoy our great weather but still get home!

Alex Evans  
 Orinda  
 (Alex Evans is a member of the Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission)

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## Planning Director Lori Salamack...

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Eight years and four Town Managers later, we are still working on it."

But Salamack is quick to point to all of the large and small projects that were approved during her tenure, from Palos Colorados to the Moraga Center Specific Plan. She also takes pride in the fact that Moraga was first in the area to gain approval of its Housing Element, complying with State regulations. "One of the greatest challenges of the job is to understand the fine points of the Town's regulations, and interpret the rules in a manner that's consistent over a range of similar projects," says Salamack. One of Moraga's main issues is development in Open Space and near ridgelines. "The definition of ridge lines and the rules that apply to them are contained in the General Plan," she says, "but the General Plan defines the rules only for MOSO (Moraga Open Space Ordinance) land and areas immediately adjacent to MOSO. It indicates that ridge lines have to be protected, which leaves room for interpretation."

Salamack adds that reasonable people can differ in their interpretation of the rules and that it is the role of the Town Council to interpret the law. Some projects are in process in Moraga that will involve deciding what kind development can occur in open space—for example, the Hetfield project and the Town-owned property along the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail.

Salamack's knowledge of the Town's Municipal Code, all 356 pages, is widely recognized and praised. Town Council Member Mike Metcalf started working with Salamack eight years ago when he was chair of the Planning Commission. "Lori is a very perceptive person and she has a remarkable analytical mind,"

said Metcalf, "she always produced very clear and understandable staff reports and she's been uncompromising in her commitment to the Town's law," which, according to Metcalf, was not always what people wanted to hear.

This held true for Moraga resident Hollie Lucas-Alcalay, who was unhappy a few months back after talking with Salamack about the pending arrival of the Dollar Tree store, and who would have preferred a more sustainable approach to planning. "We saw things differently but she really knew her stuff," said Lucas-Alcalay, "Moraga is not an easy town and it is not easy to please everybody."

Planning Commissioner Bruce Whitley, who worked with Salamack for many years, recalls, "Seven years ago, when I was a new, green, Planning Commission member, Lori took the time and effort to teach me how to best contribute as a member of the Commission. For that, I am personally in her debt," he says, adding that he believes Salamack was invaluable in enhancing the Town's commercial community while preserving its semi-rural character. "For her efforts, the Town of Moraga is in Lori's debt," he said.

On August 5, her last day on the job, Salamack was finishing her review of the Environmental Impact Report for a 126-home development proposed by the Bruzzone family for its 180-acre property located in Bollinger Canyon, listed as a 'study area' in the General Plan.

With other proposed developments across from the Rheem Shopping Center and the Moraga Center Specific Plan area, this big file now sits squarely on the lap of the new Planning Director, Shawna Brekke Read, who started work on August 11.

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