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## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I am pleased to see that the City of Orinda is going to poll its residents to measure the level of support for taking action to fix our roads. I have been a resident of Orinda for 32 years. We moved here because Orinda was one of the premier communities in the Bay Area. While that hasn't changed, it is disheartening to see the continuing deterioration of our roads. As a civil engineer and a transportation planner I know what level of effort it takes over time to maintain roads. Besides the annoyance of maneuvering around the potholes, cracks and bumps, the poor road conditions pose a threat to bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages. Year after year the amount of money available has fallen way short of what is needed. Now our wonderful community is known as having some of the poorest pavement conditions in the Bay Area. It is not a matter of saving money by reducing city expenditures to put more into road maintenance. In order to put our roads in good repair we will need something in the range of \$60 million. The total annual budget for the City is only \$10 - \$11 million. The day is gone when we can rely on outside help at the state or federal level to address these problems. Pointing fingers and debating about who should have done what is not going to get our roads fixed. It is time for us to step forward as a united community and do the right thing to solve this problem.

Sincerely,  
Bill Hurrell  
Orinda

Editor:

Having worked with the city and my neighbors over the past two years to successfully repave a large portion of Crestview Drive, I have come to some realizations about Orinda's infrastructure problems. There is not nearly enough money in the city budget to address the problem. Nobody likes the idea of increased taxes, but frankly, I would rather that we raise the money and spend it right here where we can all keep an eye it. We cannot expect anyone to effectively and efficiently solve this city's most pressing issue without resources, but those resources must be spent wisely. I suspect it will be very difficult to get 2/3 of voters to approve such a tax, especially when half of Orindans live on reasonably sound roads. People give a myriad of reasons why they would not approve additional taxes, often reaching back into our short history to point out various expenditures that were not necessary, or to raise concerns about the negative aspects of higher taxes, or simply not trusting our government leaders to do the right thing. How can we move past discussing the problems and towards a working solution? Consider the comments you hear when discussing this topic with friends and neighbors. Consider your own personal skill set and what you can do to help the community. To give you an example, while the city was looking into the idea of benefit assessment districts, I polled my neighbors about their feelings on the subject. Some respondents felt additional taxes would have a negative impact on property values, so together with two neighbors in the real estate industry, Lisa Geary and Jeannie Anderson, we polled Realtors. We found that generally local Realtors felt a moderate tax increase would not negatively affect home values or sales, but continued deferment of road maintenance would. I also recently spoke against MOFD's proposed commercial purchase because I understood that any perceived misuse of funds by a local public entity would fuel a negative response to any future spending, and Orinda's roads are more important to me than MOFD's administrative staff having comfortable digs. We are all familiar with the arguments for a bond measure having to do with safety, fewer car repairs, increased property values, community pride, and peace of mind, but I suggest that the more involved you are, the more you will want to see Orinda succeed in its efforts to repair its infrastructure. Be a part of the solution.

Diana Stephens  
Orinda

Editor:

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) states that they have \$18 million in pension liabilities. In reality, footnote 8 of their audited financial statements shows that they have liabilities with an accounting value of \$143 million and offsetting assets of \$125 million. The market value of these assets is less; about \$117 million. But what is the \$143 million of liabilities? It is the present value, using a 7.75% discount rate, of a 60 year stream of future liabilities. What is their undiscounted value? No one seems to know or will tell but one person has estimated that they add up to over \$600 million. If you discount them at a lower rate, let's say 6%, the present value would be \$185 million and our "net liability" would then be closer to \$70 million just for pensions. A \$70 million pension obligation is a far cry from the \$18 million MOFD projection.

Vince Maiorana

Orinda

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