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### ...from Front Page

## Orinda City Council Initiates Eminent Domain Proceedings to Keep Glorietta Project on Track

... continued from page A1

Council Member Amy Worth noted that the City has been working since the 2000 flood to identify the best way to fix the problem. Those plans are detailed in numerous staff reports on the City's web site. In a nutshell, it's complex; it's going to be hugely expensive, and "the surrounding properties will be subject to a severe risk of flooding" if the project is not completed, according to the reports.

The easements will enable the workers to get in and do what they need to do in 2012 before a section of the culvert fails completely – and during the only time the weather will be suitable for the work – from June to October. Staff anticipate that the project can be completed in three months or less and "should only involve minor inconvenience for property owners." The City has also "committed to restoring the sur-

face of the affected properties to their condition before construction."

Because time is now running out, the Council concluded that the easements on the remaining properties are "compatible with the greatest public good and least private injury" and initiated eminent domain proceedings.

Seanna Allen, one of the owners of the Glorietta Court property facing eminent domain proceedings, disagrees with the City's statement that its personnel have been negotiating with the Allens for a year.

"We're not trying to stop the project. We just want time to get our appraisals done," said Allen as she explained that she and her husband have been waiting on a report from an independent surveyor who only just completed work on January 6.

In addition to the surveyor's

guidance, the Allens have been consulting with an arborist regarding the project's possible effect on their backyard, including the potential impact to a redwood tree estimated to be 75-feet tall. Removing the tree would totally change the backyard's landscaping, but leaving it in place could be problematic if the root system were to be weakened during the drainage system work.

A volunteer for community projects, Allen affirmed, "We love our community. We love our neighbors," and said that she and her husband look forward to working with the City.

"All of us still hope we'll still be able to work this out," said Glazer. Staff will continue their efforts to negotiate with the property owners while the eminent domain action moves forward in the hope that further legal action can be avoided.

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## How Many Candles on Your Cake? February 29



Attention Leap Year babies: *Lamorinda Weekly* wants to speak with you!

If you were born February 29, we'd like to hear how you celebrate your special, once-every-four-year birthday! If you missed the magic date by mere hours, and have a late-in-the-day February 28 birthday or an early morning March 1 birthday, we want to listen to your story too! Please reply before February 22. Call our office at (925) 377-0977, or e-mail Cathy Dausman at [cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com).  
*C.Dausman*

## Merrick Pleads Guilty

It was a case that shook Lamorinda to its very core. For some, it ended quietly in a court room on January 20th.

Just days before his trial was set to begin, Michael Merrick, a former Lafayette teacher, entered into a plea bargain and pleaded guilty to six felony charges of sex crimes against a minor for acts

that took place on the campus of Stanley Middle School in the summer of 2010. Merrick was sentenced to five years and eight months in prison.

Merrick was arrested in October of 2010 and arraigned on 25 felony counts after the 14-year-old victim, who he had been tutoring, came forward.

*L.Borrowman*

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