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Meet the Orinda Council Candidates: Steven Glazer

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Steven Glazer

Orinda has roughly a \$10 million annual budget - small when considering the programs it offers and problems it faces. What shape is the City in - and what must our leaders do over the next 10 years to improve our fiscal picture?

Despite the economic recession, our city budget is balanced and we maintain prudent reserves. This has occurred because we have eliminated non-essential programs, reduced staff, and improved efficiencies.

Orinda is one of the few cities in California that addresses retirement benefits through a defined contribution plan for employees. Therefore, we do not have the financial overhang of pension or post employment health care obligations that are straining the budget of most other cities.

I am particularly proud of our efforts to involve more citizens in the decision-making process of the town. We have established new advisory and oversight committees on finances, infrastructure and traffic safety. This has made our governance more inclusive and transparent.

We have improved the planning and design review process. This has benefited homeowners who want to improve their property as well as residents who want to ensure that remodeling fits into the character of our unique neighborhoods.

We continue to have a serious infrastructure challenge as our aging roads and drains fail. This is an approximately \$50 million problem in a city whose entire annual budget is around \$10 million. Importantly, the Council has worked hard to spend our scarce road repair dollars in a way that maximizes benefit and cost efficiency.

We have worked hard to secure regional, state and federal grants to improve roads; but, without a new funding source, our roads and drains will continue to deteriorate. The City Council has adopted a 10-year road and drain repair plan, which would be funded, in part, by a small sales tax increase. I strongly encourage our residents to support

this effort by voting yes on Measure L this November.

What can Orindans do right now to help?

I would encourage our residents to support Measure L. It is an important first step to funding our 10-year road and drain repair plan. I would also encourage our residents to shop and dine in Orinda, thereby helping our local businesses and providing valuable sales tax dollars that fund repairs to Orinda roads.

A great community is a collection of people who are working well together to achieve common goals while respecting their occasional differences. Our founding fathers wrote of each individual's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; but this is possible only when we come together to support each other in reaching these ideals.

I believe deeply in community service and I hope that I have set an example for both my daughters and others in the importance of giving back to the community that has given us so much.

Theatre Square is thriving again, delighting residents, but other "downtown development" issues roil the waters. What needs to happen with the downtown, and why?

I support efforts to improve our downtown while maintaining its small town charm. The city should be supportive of property owners who want to improve their facilities. This may include upgrading retail and office spaces as well as the addition of residential housing.

I have supported changes to policies affecting Theater Square that have resulted in improved public shopping and dining. And, I have supported improved housing opportunities for seniors in our downtown. Most importantly, I have sought ways to expand opportunities for more citizens to get involved in local government through groups such as the public safety and infrastructure committees.

The current conflict seems to be centered over allowing an increase in building heights. Unless we have a specific plan that makes clear how greater building heights will maintain and enhance Orinda's small town charm, we should resist efforts to arbitrarily increase building heights.

The city doesn't own its downtown, but we have an important role to play in making sure that planning policies protect our city's character while working cooperatively with property owners who want to improve their buildings.

The city staff, planning commission, and council should be committed to this shared goal.

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