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## Orinda City Council Considers Forming Public Safety Commission New service opportunity for residents in the works

By Laurie Snyder

More Boy Scouts than adult Orindans were on hand to hear the Orinda City Council conduct business at its Nov. 27 meeting. Council members discussed the possible reconstitution of a disbanded Public Safety Commission in follow up to their Sept. 4 deliberations regarding the same matter.

As residents may remember, Orinda's last Public Safety Advisory Committee was born Aug. 17, 2004. Comprised of seven council-appointed members, it was given "duties related to the review and establishment of City policies and programs in the areas of emergency preparedness and crime prevention." According to the Sept. 4 staff report, however, the group "segued into more of an implementation group carrying out policies, training, and programs" - and that was a problem. OPSAC's actions conflicted with the council's initial resolution, resulting in "compliance issues with the Brown Act."

The city council dissolved OPSAC in 2009, opting instead to support the emergency preparedness and response efforts of various volunteer groups.

One such group is the Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT). CERT's steering committee is comprised of two representatives each from Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda, and develops CERT policies and recommendations.

Another is the Orinda Citizen's Corps Council which "coordinates CERT, Neighborhood Watch, Emergency Communications, Fire District Communications and Logistics volunteers." Both Lafayette and Moraga have similar bodies. Their mission "is to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds."

At the time that the city council disbanded Orinda's Public Safety Commission, it also tasked council members Steve Glazer and Amy Worth (currently mayor and vice-mayor respectively) with the formation of a subcommittee to assess Orinda's various public safety efforts, including the aforementioned citizen's council and the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee which reviews Orindans' requests for traffic calming measures.

The council subcommittee met Oct. 26. Attendees at the public meeting included Police Chief Jeffrey Jennings, Moraga Orinda Fire District Chief Randy Bradley and MOFD Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein, and City Manager Janet Keeter. The Glazer-Worth subcommittee suggested that Orinda hold a joint meeting with the Town of Moraga annually - at which MOFD would be invited to present the fire district's annual report to the two councils and the public.

Members also suggested that Orinda city staff present an annual disaster preparedness report, assessing the state of citizens' preparedness and the city's readiness, and providing updates regarding citizen HAM radio and Orinda Citizen's Corps Council operations.

In addition, the subcommittee recommended that the city council create a new city public safety commission under a new charter. Five Orinda citizens would be appointed to the commission, which would "be advisory to the Police Chief and City Manager. The Committee would not be involved in police personnel matters." The proposed commission, meeting twice per year, would discuss the police budget, emergency plans, annual crime statistics, Citizen's Corps activities, and police involvement with civic events such as Orinda Night Out and the 4th of July Parade.

"This was a unanimous recommendation," said Worth who noted that the subcommittee considered the input of both emergency services professionals and volunteers involved in disaster preparedness and response.

Although the Town of Moraga does not have a similar committee or commission, the City of Lafayette has formed a city council subcommittee to review its public safety issues. Jennings described the proposed new public safety commission as "a great conduit to get my message out about public safety."

Next steps: Keeter will invite Moraga's Town Council to participate in an annual joint meeting, and will return to a future council meeting with wording allowing the council to create a public safety commission. City Clerk Michele Olsen will then begin announcing and recruiting for openings.

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