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Civic News Lafayette

Leaders Apologize for Chip Seal Road Repair, Offer Refunds

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Twenty roads in Burton Valley received a chip seal to prolong the life of the road; many of the chip seal recipients were in the overflow crowd as the City Council addressed the issue.

The objective of the chip seal pavement treatment was simply to extend the life of the roads that are failing. Given the city's limited funds, more streets could be treated with this less expensive pavement treatment. The chip seal was intended to serve as an effective water barrier over the existing cracked pavement, keeping water out of the road subgrade, thus retarding the rate of pavement deterioration and extending whatever amount of service life remained in the road, according to the staff report.

As neighbors initially complained, they were informed that a slurry seal could be placed on top of the chip seal to smooth the surface of their roads. Unfortunately city staff didn't have the authority to spend ad-

ditional funds at that time to pay for the work. As an alternative, the city agreed to cover half the cost of the slurry seal, as had been done before, and residents could chip in for the other half, roughly \$200 per household. Quick action was necessary to do the work while the contractor was still available. The city's remedy for the situation at that time would have come from the project's contingency fund.

More than 100 residents chose to contribute money toward a fix; some called their contribution "extortion." At the recent City Council meeting one citizen complained, "It's not fair for residents to pay for the city's mistake."

Ann Burns, who diligently worked on the last road repair campaign, asked for a public apology. She and the standing-room-only crowd got one. Mayor Mike Anderson offered, "a sincere apology to all of you. There was no intent to harm,

thank you for putting up with our mistake." New council member Traci Reilly heard from constituents at Buckeye Fields. "I know how angry you feel about this," she said. On a unanimous vote, the council agreed to issue refund checks to all who contributed to the cause – a total of over \$23,000. To place a slurry seal over all of the chip-sealed streets should cost approximately \$57,000 that will come from the reserve account of the general fund.

"We are pleased that the City Council acknowledged the problems with the chip seal and readily agreed to cover the costs for the slurry seal. This is an equitable way to resolve the issue," said Elizabeth McNeil speaking for herself and some fellow Burton Valley neighbors. "We appreciate how hard the City Council works to manage growing demands for services on limited resources. Chip seal... is not a solution for the residential, kid-friendly streets of Lafayette."

Civic News Orinda

Early Childhood Education a Phair Bet?

... continued from page A7

Added David Anderson, "The preschool is certainly a worthwhile institution for parents, children and members of the community. But, the school has no place – per common sense, but most importantly per our Municipal Code – in our commercial district."

One segment of the code cited frequently by opponents reads, "Places of religious assembly and preschools are appropriately located in residential areas if served by arterial or collector roads, subject to review of impacts."

Conversely, Orinda Watch members and other supporters cited regu-

lations requiring the city to "create a vibrant community center by encouraging a variety of businesses which will create pedestrian interaction and pedestrian-scale activities. This will happen, they said, as Fountainhead visitors stop off at local restaurants.

Julie Schadlich expressed her hope "that the members of the Planning Commission and the City Council will see the value of a school being built in the downtown area, close to facilities such as the Orinda Library, the Orinda Community Center, the park. ... I believe that children enlighten a community and bring spirit to its residents."

Commissioners opted to hear residents' concerns regarding potential impacts to Orinda but then decided, due to the late hour, to act only on the question of whether or not city regulations allow preschools to operate in commercial areas. On a 5 to 2 vote (Carlos Baltodano and Joe McGrath dissenting), the commission ruled that current regulations do sanction this type of usage, subject to the approval of use permits.

California Environmental Quality Act and land use entitlement reviews were slated to be taken up at the commission's Aug. 27 meeting. To learn more, visit the city's website.

A Day in the Life of Orinda's Maintenance Staff

From power washing sidewalks to keeping bathrooms clean and playfields green, Orinda's Parks and Recreation pros do whatever it takes to keep Orinda beautiful – and its residents safe, healthy and engaged with the community. "You can appreciate how versatile and hardworking these remarkable guys are," said Lamorinda Weekly photographer Ohlen Alexander after recently observing a day in the life of facility attendants Antonio Arroyo and Les Graham.

The dynamic duo are known as much for their ready smiles as their helping hands – even when work shifts extend past midnight due to late night city council and commission sessions. So, next time you see them out and about, introduce yourself and say, "Thanks."

L. Snyder



Top: Antonio Arroyo and Les Graham check to make sure the microphone levels are set for the Orinda City Council meeting.

Middle: Antonio Arroyo power washes the sidewalks.

Bottom: Les Graham working at the new Wilder playfields.

Photos Ohlen Alexander