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## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

We are writing to state our support for Measure J on the June ballot which would provide \$20 million in bond funds to fix Orinda roads. The bonds would be paid for by a tax of about \$110 annually on homeowners. We find that Measure J is a sound and prudent investment in long-overdue infrastructure repairs and necessary to maintain our quality of life and the economic viability of our semi-rural residential neighborhoods. We disagree with those who urge a No vote on Measure J for the following reasons:

Measure J is part of an orderly and timely multi-year plan which supplements earlier revenues from a half-cent sales tax voters approved in 2012. Each phase of the financing plan enables the city to repair roads and storm drains so that we will no longer have the lowest rating in Contra Costa County.

Low interest rates and an urgent and unquestioned need for road and storm drain repair prompts us to agree that now is the time to approve this bond act. Further, long term debt when paid for by a designated revenue source, is an appropriate and legitimate funding mechanism for capital improvements which provide long-term benefits to the residents of our community.

Measure J contains safeguards through citizen oversight and an annual audit to convince us that the funds will be well spent implementing the Orinda Roads and Drainage Repair Plan. This plan has been vetted and publicly approved. We disagree with opponents who call for each road repair project to be specified. This is inconsistent with representative democracy and smacks of the ballot box budgeting, reviled by public finance experts.

We the Undersigned are meeting on a monthly basis to dialogue with each other and with organizations and individuals in Orinda ~under the umbrella theme Envisioning 21st Century Orinda. We are still in formation, but welcome conversation with all those who live and work here who are concerned about our community's future. One of the values we hold dear is quality infrastructure for our city, and thus we wanted to express support for this important ballot measure.

Sincerely,

Karen Brockwell, David Finkbeiner, Michael Hofmayer, Rev. Hubert Ivery, Elisabeth & Micheal Kersten, Eartha Newsong, Valerie Sloven, and Bill Waterman  
Orinda

Editor:

Common sense says Fix Orinda's Roads. They are only going to get worse and then cost even more to fix. Our "city fathers" have done a good job in starting the fix but there is much left to be done and we can't stop now. Otherwise we will slip further back in the hole again.

Dot and Ray Wilson  
Orinda

Editor:

On the June 3, 2014 ballot Orindans will be voting on a 20-million-dollar road and drain tax, Measure J.

The Orinda City Council will not tell each of the Orinda voters what improvements will be made to their street using the proposed road and drain tax or when these improvements will be made. You will pay the tax, but what will you get for your street?

In the January 24, 2014, issue of the Lamorinda Sun, which is part of the Friday Contra Costa Times, Charles Swanson, the Orinda Public Works Director, told the Sun that a 20-million-dollar tax would fund the repair of about a third of the City's residential streets. In other words, 60-million dollars in bonds would be needed to fix all the streets.

Orinda residents living on private roads will pay the tax but get NO money for their road.

In the March 7, 2014, issue of the Lamorinda Sun it was reported that the principal and interest on a 20-million-dollar bond would be 30.6-million dollars. So to furnish the needed 60-million dollars to fix all the roads 3 x 30.6-million dollars or 91-million dollars (principal and interest) will be needed. Can we afford 91-million dollars in new taxes?

This proposed 20-million-dollar bond is merely the first step in a series of taxes which will cost taxpayers 91-million dollars (principal and interest) to bring all Orinda roads and drains up to good condition.

If you dislike the fact that the City Council will not tell you when your road will be brought up to good condition, please vote NO on this ballot.

If you don't feel you can afford to fund 91-million dollars in new taxes to upgrade all Orinda residential streets to good condition, please vote NO on this ballot.

Clyde Vaughn  
Orinda

Editor:

Everyone in Orinda understands that our roads are in deplorable condition. Measure J is a prudent and responsible plan that is designed to accelerate the repair of Orinda's worst roads and storm drains. A Yes vote will expend approximately \$20 million over the next four years to repair the worst of our residential roads. Expenditures will be audited and are under the supervision of a citizen's infrastructure oversight commission, using established criteria and focusing on repair of the worst roads first. A No vote will only further delay these needed repairs (perhaps for years) as the roads continue to deteriorate, costs increase and we quarrel over how to pay for something we essentially all agree needs to be done as soon as possible. A Yes vote, on the other hand, will allow us to begin residential road repair now and to do so in a way that will have a major positive impact on our worst roads. It will improve the safety and appearance of our roads, reduce unnecessary tire wear and auto repairs, enhance property values and increase the quality of life in Orinda. We should not further delay these needed repairs. Please vote yes on Measure J!

Brad Barber  
Orinda

Editor:

Voting NO for Measure J (phase2) is necessary so we can get all roads repaired in a timely and cost effective manner! The city plan is to have voters pass Measure J this year and then pass Phase 3 & 4 in future years. Sounds good, but here are the barriers to achievement. First, Measure J needs two-thirds majority to pass. Second, each phase will be competing with other needs such as school funds. Third, if Measure J is approved then fewer voters are likely to approve the next phase because their roads have been repaired, thus the required two-thirds majority will not be achieved. The proposed approach leads to getting very few of the roads repaired. The best approach is to have the total need for repair provided as a Measure. This way all citizens know their road repair needs will be accomplished. The piecemeal approach that the proponents of Measure J propose leads to a lot of uncertainty and doubt that the total job will ever be achieved. As a retired civil engineer with 35 years of experience in the National Forests in California I say with confidence, Measure J is NOT the way!

Jerry Wooten  
Orinda

Editor:

I am usually opposed to any new taxes and skeptical of government promises. But I do not understand the argument being made by some that we should vote no on Measure J because it would not collect enough to fix our roads. Measure J's \$20 million bond does not entirely solve our problem or make up for past neglect. However, Measure J is a good investment that will make a difference. All funds are dedicated to the residential roads that need help most, managed under the oversight of a citizen committee. Vote Yes on J, now, and stay engaged in finding long term

solutions to fixing and maintaining our roads!

Jason Kaune

Orinda

Editor:

Ten Millions for big banks?

Mayor Sue Severson's letter states that the average homeowner will pay about \$100 to \$150.

Annually for \$20 Million general obligation bond over 20 year life. She did not say the bond's actual costs will be \$30 Million. Ten Million to the big banks.

Using the \$150 figure to calculate how many homes & businesses there are in Orinda gives us first a cost of \$3,000 over 20 years for each one which then calculates to be 10,000 homes and businesses.

Can we avoid paying 10 million dollars to the big banks? If the 10,000 homes and businesses would voluntarily contribute to a street fund, we could save 10 million and the cost would be only \$100 per year.

The city is talking about three of these bonds, one every few years. Will it only take three bond measures? No! Check out Sleepy Hollow Lane, North side, which was repaved about 5 years ago. Too bad it shows signs of failure from one end to the other. This street will need to be repaved again soon. Some homeowners have out of necessity paved their own street.

I say the city should collect the funds necessary on the first of each year for road repair thru voluntary gifts to "Fix our Roads" organization which would then funnel the gifts to road repair fund. Homeowners and businesses would need to know what their minimum voluntary contribution would be.

One hundred dollars per year for each of the 10,000 would be one million for road repair per year.

I just can't find it in my heart to vote 10 million for big banks.

Gerald Perry

Orinda

Editor:

I am writing to show how Orindans can come together to fix our roads. For the record, I have been a member of Orinda's Citizen's Infrastructure Oversight Commission (CIOC) since it was created seven years ago, and I am a supporter of the June bond. I believe the majority of Orindans agree with me. But there are some who oppose the bond despite agreement that (1) our roads are in deplorable condition and (2) we should start by fixing our worst residential roads, as the June bond will do.

The dissenters argue that we need a more detailed plan for what comes after the June bond. But this is putting the cart before the horse. We need to start by fixing our worst residential roads. We have a list of these roads - road segment by road segment - and engineering estimates of the cost of repair. Detailed engineering analysis will be completed for each road as additional revenue becomes available. This is standard project management process in road management. The current Chair of the CIOC has a lifetime of professional engineering experience managing roads and road policy. We know what needs to be done and have an appropriate plan. Any disagreements about "What comes next" should not stop us from doing what all know should be done now.

Some have argued that we cannot "trust" the city to use the June bond funds wisely. But there also is no controversy over how the City has been spending available funds on the roads. The City has focused current (gas tax) funds on arterials and collectors - the roads most heavily used by nearly all Orindans, and all of these roads are expected to be in good to excellent condition within the next five years using existing funding sources. The new sales tax revenues approved by voters in 2011 are being used to begin fixing our worst residential roads. The first two roads are currently out for bids and will be rebuilt this summer. Without exception, the City Council has endorsed and implemented all of the recommendations of the CIOC regarding road policy or road selection. There is no controversy here. There has been some controversy in Orinda over planning issues, but it would be silly to use this controversy to stop us from doing what we all agree needs to be done now -- fix our worst residential roads.

Here is my proposal. Let's all come together and do what we agree on now - vote for the June bond

(Measure J) and get our worst residential roads fixed. Then after passing the bond, let's all come back together to work out legitimate differences that we may have for the remainder of the plan. The City's roads plan expressly calls for a reevaluation every two years. We could start working on a revised plan in 2015, aiming for adoption and voter approval in 2016.

We can make local politics work. A big "yes" vote on the June bond is the best way to jump start this effort and keep us working together to achieve what is a common and important goal.

Richard Nelson

Orinda

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[back](#)

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