

Letters to the Editor ... continued

Orinda City Council

Can Orinda Preserve its Semi-rural Character?

Dear Editor,

Be careful what you vote for: semi-rural vs. more congestion. In well-established Orinda, known for its excellent schools and safe environment, a key election battle is surfacing between those supporting local control, semi-rural values, and organic growth versus the big money pro-real estate development interests.

Some residents are concerned that city council candidates, construction executive Darlene Gee, and real estate attorney Inga Miller, who want to hire the Urban Land Institute, to lead the process of evaluating Orinda's downtown, will invariably lead to new massive multi-story condos, increased traffic congestion, and major violations of Orinda's General Plan.

Favoring semi-rural values, adherence to the general plan, code compliant buildings (to 35 feet), and organic growth, are candidates Dr. Bruce London, a retired radiologist, and educator Linda Delehunt.

The outcome is significant, and might be a role model for neighboring cities, as it represents an understanding that population density, overbuilding, and municipal code violations become major impairments to safety and quality of life issues.

Chris Kniel
Orinda

Does Gee Represent Developers?

Dear Editor,

Darlene Gee, appointed to the Orinda City Council in July, 2015, states: "None of my campaign contributions are from development interests" (letter to the editor, Lamorinda Weekly, Oct. 19). Ms. Gee is seeking a full four-year term on the Orinda City Council.

A review of Ms. Gee's campaign contributions from July 11 to Sept. 24 reveals that Ms. Gee has indeed received campaign contributions from development interests. Contribution to Ms. Gee's campaign were reported on Sept. 29, 2016, by the Orinda City Clerk's office.

Ms. Gee is a vice president of the HNTB Corporation, a construction and engineering firm. According to HNTB's website, HNTB has done work for BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit).

On Sept. 16, Ms. Gee received \$1,000 from the HNTB Holdings PAC (political action committee) located in Kansas City, Missouri. On Sept. 6, Ms. Gee received a \$200 contribution from Grace Crunican, the general manager of BART and a resident of Alameda.

From her fellow HNTB employees, Ms. Gee received five contributions. Four of the five contributions came from HNTB employees who live outside of Orinda. Here are the names, locations, and dollar amounts donated by these five employees: Anthony Lee (Cranford, NJ, \$99); Dina Potter (Piedmont, CA, \$500); Joshua Englander (Sherman Oaks, CA \$100); Shannon Gaffney (Moraga, CA, \$100); and Darrell Vice (Orinda, CA, \$250).

According to California Form 497 (dated Sept. 21), HNTB donated \$20,000 to support Measure X, which, if enacted by Contra Costa County's voters in November, will increase the county sales tax by one-half percentage point. This means that the sales tax in Orinda will go from 9.0 percent to 9.5 percent. Some Measure X money will go to BART. Ms. Gee supports Measure X.

If Orinda's voters elect Ms. Gee, they will have to decide if Ms. Gee will be representing Orinda's residents or the interests of the HNTB Corporation.

Richard S. Colman
Orinda

Two Clear Candidates for Orinda Council

Dear Editor,

Owen Murphy (LW, 10/4, Letters) is right. There is indeed a clear choice in the city council election. This election finally gives Orinda voters the opportunity to send a clear mandate to the next city council to move forward with a community discussion on revitalizing our downtown. Do we stick with the status quo, which means ineffective policies that have let our downtown fall into disrepair and disuse, while letting other communities leapfrog us? Or do we launch an important discussion on what it will take to restore downtown to a place of vibrancy, economic activity and pride?

Unfortunately, Mr. Murphy wrongly frames the important choice ahead of us with questions designed to frighten more than enlighten.

He asks which candidates would take a flexible approach to height limits and density in crafting an economically viable downtown plan based on community input. Certainly not Bruce London or Linda Delehunt, his preferred candidates, who seem inflexible on current land use restrictions governing our downtown. Yet these government restrictions have led to crumbling buildings and vacant lots downtown. It's past time for the community to revisit the rules.

He asks, "Who would allow new downtown development to provide fewer on-site parking spaces?" The answer: no one. His support for Bruce London and Linda Delehunt implies that Darlene Gee and Inga Miller would. Wrong.

He asks which candidates "seem oblivious to the potential impact of downtown residential development on school class size, increased traffic, public safety, and an exacerbated downtown parking squeeze?" Again, no one. It is impossible to ignore such impacts in any meaningful dialogue about downtown development. Why does he assume they would? No facts, just fears.

Finally, he states that there are only two candidates "without conflict-of-interest ties to the real estate and development special interests." This baseless smear implies that Gee and Miller have such ties. Wrong.

Mr. Murphy is correct. There is indeed a clear choice in this election. The status quo on downtown isn't working. Make the choice that will improve our quality of life and our property values. Vote for Darlene Gee and Inga Miller. Andy and Carole Amstutz Rudy and Laurie Reich Bob Burt Mike and Ginny Ross Ethan Elkind Bill Waterman Orinda

Orinda Needs Community Service, Not Lip Service

Dear Editor,

As I look at the track records of the four candidates vying for the two seats to be filled on the Orinda City Council on Nov. 8, I notice a startling difference in the records of actual community service among the candidates.

Dr. Bruce London touts his regular attendance at Orinda City Council, Planning Commission, Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission and Finance Advisory Committee meetings. That's commendable in itself, but has he ever applied to be appointed to actually serve on any of those bodies? There's a huge difference between going to meetings and expressing one's opinion and actually being a member who has to prepare for those meetings, do his or her "homework," actively participate in all meetings, express opinions that may not be popular among dissenting groups, and actually make decisions that affect our community.

Linda Delehunt is a fellow member of a Rotary Club which reflects

her desire to serve her community. But aside from her previous unsuccessful campaigns for various elected offices, I am unaware of her involvement on any local commission, committee or board that works to enhance the quality of life in our community.

On the other hand, Inga Miller served as a member of the city's Parks and Recreation Commission and is a member of the board of Las Trampas, Inc., a local non-profit organization that has served adults with developmental disabilities for nearly 60 years.

Darlene Gee served as a member and chair of Orinda's Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission before she was appointed to the city council last year to complete the term of now-State Senator Steve Glazer.

Orinda needs and deserves city council members who have served their community with their good deeds and hard work, not just their words. Please join me in supporting the two candidates who offer

their records of community service, not lip service. On Nov. 8, vote for Darlene Gee and Inga Miller. Mark Roberts
Orinda

Gee and Miller for Council

Dear Editor,

This fall, Orinda can go forward or we can go back. We can choose to improve our amenities, restore our crumbling roads and build a more vibrant community for our kids and families - or we can go back. We can continue the same directionless course that has given us vacant lots, declining property values and unsafe roads. The choice is clear, the candidates' positions are clear, and that's why I'm supporting Inga Miller and Darlene Gee for city council.

For decades, Orindans have been disappointed as our elected leaders wrung their hands over the basics of governing. Everything from routine maintenance of our city's infrastructure to simple eco-

nomie development policy was neglected. I've heard it argued that preserving Orinda's charm was something that had to be worked at. But sustained blight is not a strategy. Doing nothing is not leadership. And now we're left with more maintenance than we afford, a commercial core that hasn't been updated in decades, and the accompanying drag on our economy and property values.

I appreciate that every candidate says they want to improve downtown, but two of those candidates opposed beginning a serious conversation on the subject at the city council. For me, that disqualifies them on this issue. That says they're not serious about progress - they're committed to the status quo.

Vote for Gee and Miller for city council.

Bergen Kenny
Orinda



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