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This private road is one of many in Orinda in need of repair, but the miles of private roads in Orinda are currently not maintained by the city.

Photo Tod Fierner

Orinda road plans deferred due to private roads issue

By Sora O'Doherty

A controversial issue that has been appearing before the city council frequently in the past months was again brought up on Feb. 6 and led the council to defer a decision on the most recent plan for road and drainage repairs. The issue concerns Orinda's private roads. The council had asked the Citizen Infrastructure Oversight Commission to provide past history or ratings of the public roads at the time of incorporation in 1985,

but the CIOC says that such data is not available. Several speakers urged the council not to approve the current CIOC Road and Drainage Repairs Plan, and Council Member Darlene Gee suggested, in light of the continuing issue of private roads that staff is currently working on, that the council not move ahead with approval of the plan. Orinda resident Steve Cohn sent an email to the council members urging that they defer action on the plan.

Residents Charles Porges and Melissa Roeder spoke at the meeting, continuing to urge the council to find a way to deal with private roads. According to the commenters, there are 29 miles of private roads in Orinda. Although residents of private roads pay all the same taxes as residents on public roads, public roads are maintained by the city and private roads are not.

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State must do more for Lamorinda schools, say elected officials

By Nick Marnell



Assemblywoman Catharine Baker presents her views on school funding, as state Sen. Steve Glazer awaits his turn. Photo Nick Marnell

California schools receive more money from the state than ever before, but it is still not enough, explained a panel of analysts and public officials Feb. 8 at the Lamorinda Education Forum hosted by the Lafayette School District.

In the 2017-18 fiscal year, California schools will receive \$93 billion in total fund-

ing, mostly derived from state personal income taxes and local property tax revenue. State funding provided K-12 schools with \$11,628 per student, a 49 percent increase over the level provided seven years ago, according to Ryan Anderson of the Legislative Analyst Office.

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Budget midyear revision: Moraga on the mend

By Sophie Braccini

Despite a midyear forecast of an additional \$940,000 in the town's general fund balance, the Moraga Town Council and the audit and finance committee agreed that it was still too early to rescind the fiscal emergency that was declared in July.

The better than expected financial results came from increased property tax revenue, interest, dividends, development-related revenue and fees, which more than made up for less than expected sales tax revenue and increased legal expenses. According to the staff report, at the time of the 2017-18 fiscal year budget adoption, "the year-end unassigned fund balance could only be projected based on estimated year-end results compiled in the months prior. Such projections are generally conservative, and in the case of the June 30 ending unassigned fund balance, the actual results (based on the audit report issued on Oct. 25) were better than expected by \$765,603."

The midyear budget presentation made to council on Feb. 14 highlighted that the town's revised fund balance is projected to reach \$2.5 million by June 30, more than 30 percent of 2018 operating expenditures, but still short of the 50 percent objective set years ago.

Meanwhile, as the town asks residents for a fee to fund its storm drain system maintenance, it is setting in place systematic ways to save its surplus for infrastructure maintenance.

The adequacy of the town's reserves still hinges on federal reimbursement. The depletion of the reserves in response to the Rheem sinkhole and Canyon Bridge failure spurred the declaration of fiscal emergency. Staff is still managing the federal reimbursement system to get back as close to 100 percent as possible of the over \$6 million spent on these projects.

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