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One way or the other, Rheem easement will reopen

By Sora O'Doherty



The gate at 53 Rheem.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

Orinda City Manager Steve Salomon asked the city council on Oct. 2 to once again continue action on accepting the easement at 53 Rheem Blvd. and promised that on Oct. 16 he would either return to them with an agreement with the property owner, or he would then advise them to accept the easement. The council agreed to do so.

Both the property owner and the neighboring residents are now represented by legal counsel and the neighbors appeared ready, if reluctant, to proceed with litigation over the issue if necessary. Salomon said that there had been meetings with the property owner and his attorneys. "We believe that the goal of getting the trail open can be met," he said.

If the city can reach an agreement with the property owner, Kent DeSpain, Salomon said the city attorney will then draft the agreement and the easement would then open "with relatively little pain." Still, he noted, "the devil is in the details;" but he estimated that there is a reasonable chance of agreement. The option of accepting the easement at the Oct. 2 meeting was available, but Salomon believed that it would result, potentially, in creating more acrimony. He acknowledged that there was urgency, and pledged to work very hard to get agreement.

Attorney Eric Shaffer of Bowing & Shaffer was hired to represent the homeowners who support the trail easement being opened. He argued that the easement creates a public good and that there had been a fair amount of legal and actual notice. The easement has been used for decades, he said, and children cannot walk on Rheem or Glorietta to get to Glorietta Elementary School. Shaffer said that the homeowner had recognized the easement when getting planning permission for his home. "Representations to the planning commission are important," Shaffer said, referring to DeSpain's promise to the commission to keep the easement open.

John and Allison Bannisadr, longtime residents who lived for 13 years on Parkway Court, said that they cared deeply about the easement, which John Bannisadr used to mow so that children could use it. Jon Cooper urged the council to accept the easement. He said that he had offered to pay for the homeowner's privacy fence and landscaping, but that the homeowner had not responded to his offer. Alexis Miller, a mother and an attorney, said that she has done a fair amount of legal research and believes that the city's interpretation of the law is correct. "We don't want to litigate, but we will," she said, if necessary.

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New principal at Orinda Intermediate School

Submitted by Carolyn Seaton



From left: Board Members Cara Hoxie & Jason Kaune, OIS Principal Stacy Wayne, Board Member Julie Rossiter, Board Vice President Hillary Weiner, and Board President Carol Brown.

Photo provided

The OUSD board of trustees approved Stacy Wayne as the next principal of Orinda Intermediate School, effective immediately. Wayne, who has been the OIS associate principal since 2011, earned a bachelor's degree in international relations from UC Santa Cruz and a master's in educational administration from San Francisco State University. She previously served for 10 years as a middle school language arts and history teacher and for an additional three years as a teacher leader on special assignment.

Wayne's selection as OIS principal leaves a vacancy in the associate principal position. Toni McShane, revered former middle school administrator in Lafayette, will continue supporting the leadership team at OIS until a replacement is found.

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