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New year, new city council, new plea to consider the plight of private street residents

By Sora O'Doherty



Residents of private streets in Orinda reminded the city council that they haven't gone away and are still asking for a task force to look into the question of whether any private streets can be adopted by the city. Charles Porges came before the council during the public forum on Jan. 8 and Steve Cohn submitted a letter to be included in the record of the same meeting.

Porges pointed out that it has been over two years since the residents of private Mira Loma first approached the city council and the Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission to ask how to become a public street. According to Porges, about 20 percent of Orinda residents live on private streets and are being charged to maintain the public residential streets (and drains) that do not differ from their streets, except that at some time before the city was incorporated the public roads were accepted by Contra Costa County.

Some private road residents feel that there is inequity because, for example, heavy garbage trucks cause the most damage to the private streets but none of the garbage impact fees go to the repair and maintenance of private streets. While the city has recourse to state and federal funds in the event of catastrophic road or

drainage failures, Porges says that private street residents do not and would be burdened with the entire cost of such an event, shared only by the few residents of the road.

Cohn requested that the council not only establish a committee to review the current sales tax, but more generally review the long-term funding needs for all of Orinda's streets and storm drains and create a long-term funding plan.

Cohn suggested that it is now the time to discuss what he says are 30 miles of private residential streets in Orinda which look just like and act just like the 64 miles of public residential streets. Cohn urged Orinda not to risk alienating 20 percent of its residents, which could result in a lack of support for future fundraising measures for the maintenance of public roads.

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