



## ORINDA

See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

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## Public input requested at Orinda downtown development workshop

By Sora O'Doherty

A workshop to receive public input about the Connect - Orinda Streetscape Master Plan will be held at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29 at the Library Auditorium. Hundreds of community members have been involved in the process through online public surveys, the project's October launch event and stakeholder interviews. Now Orinda staff and the project consultant have taken these ideas and concerns and turned them into a list of projects for Orinda.

The workshop will be an opportunity for Orinda residents to discuss and provide feedback on a list of potential ConnectOrinda projects which has been created based on survey comments and staff and consultant input. At this stage the list of potential projects is quite long, and the feedback received at the workshop will help the city council decide which projects should be included in the final Connect-

Orinda Streetscape Master Plan.

The preliminary list of projects will be unveiled at the workshop. Members of the city council, staff and the consultant team will be available to hear what the public thinks about the suggested projects. Feedback received at the workshop will be then used to whittle down the list to those projects that will be pursued for funding and implementation. Staff and consultants would like to celebrate a final project list in May.

The ConnectOrinda project includes three milestone meetings. The launch event was held on Oct. 13. The purpose of this event was to explain the project scope and solicit community input regarding how to improve Orinda's downtown streetscape. Approximately 150 people participated in the event and hundreds more filled out surveys.

The Jan. 29 workshop, which will be a special meeting of the city council, will

include a presentation by staff and the consultant team to the city council regarding the projects under consideration, including how they were arrived at based on community input. There will also be a breakout workshop session where participants can review and provide feedback on the projects under consideration, which will be depicted on several large maps, with staff and consultants present at each "map station" to answer questions. The workshop will include a format for participants to indicate which projects they want to see included in the final plan. After the breakout session, there will be an opportunity for public comments to the council as well as remarks by council members. The council will not be asked to take any actions or make any recommendations at this meeting.

The final milestone meeting will be the "ConnectOrinda Celebration" sometime in the spring. At this meeting, staff and consultants will provide

detailed information regarding the projects the council selects for inclusion in the Streetscape Master Plan. The final plan document will be completed in the months following the Celebration meeting.

For those who cannot attend the workshop, there will be an opportunity to provide comments on a new map survey that will be released the day after the workshop.

Based on the feedback received at the workshop as well as feedback from the map survey, staff will return at a regular council meeting some time in February or early March with a recommended list of projects to be included in the Streetscape Master Plan. Once the projects are finalized, staff will work with consultants to do a "deep dive" into these projects in preparation for the Celebration meeting and, ultimately, for inclusion in the Master Plan.

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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.

## Orinda pastor doubles as high-profile diocesan administrator



Rev. George Mockel Photo provided

By Nick Marnell

The problem with performing well at a job that you could just as soon do without is that the boss makes it very hard

for you to leave.

Despite requesting that his term as vicar general of the Catholic Diocese of Oakland not be renewed so that he could devote more time to his parish, Rev. George Mockel, pastor of the Church of Santa Maria in Orinda, has been reappointed to the post. As vicar general, Mockel aids Bishop Michael Barber in the overall governance and administration of the diocese. A loose comparison in the business world would be a chief operating officer – the vicar general – working with a chief executive officer – the bishop.

"I have always enjoyed working with people, in a parish," Mockel said. He has served as the vicar general of the Oakland diocese since 2005 under three bishops, and with each change at the top, Mockel expected he would be

released to do solely his parish work. But his background in canon law, his administrative abilities and his experience were too much for each bishop to pass up.

Mockel was born in Oakland. He said he felt something of a calling to the priesthood as a teenager, but he wrestled with the feelings, not unlike Jacob in the book of Genesis. His aha moment, though, was hardly biblical. "It hit me one day when I was sitting in the family room, watching television," he said.

Even his time in the Mountain View seminary was a struggle, and he often thought about leaving. "The '60s impacted everyone. It wasn't cool to be a priest," Mockel said. But he persevered, and was ordained in Oakland in 1975.

Though Mockel kids about the various pulls away

from the parish work that he loves, he has no regrets. "I never got an assignment that I wanted, and I never wanted an assignment that I got," Mockel said. "But I wouldn't change any of them for a million dollars."

The Oakland diocese plans to release a report in February that names all clergy "credibly accused of sexual abuse." Mockel did not comment on whether any priests who served in Lamorinda parishes were on that list. "I can't because I don't know," he said, as Mockel has had no involvement with the investigation which the chancellor of the diocese, Stephen Wilcox, is coordinating. Wilcox did not respond to a request for comment.

"Having this investigation led by a lay person is probably best," Mockel said. "It's good that we are putting the

list out. I hope that it doesn't turn out that a person on that list is innocent, and that they are doing this very carefully."

Mockel called the sexual abuse of minors a "terrible tragedy" and stressed that the Church needs to "get this right."

The bishop said he was grateful to Mockel for his loyalty and for the excellent job he has done in the diocese. "I thank Father Mockel for his continued service and dedication to Christ's flock that has been entrusted to our care and most especially at Santa Maria Parish," Barber said in a statement.

Mockel did admit to an unexpected benefit of working the two jobs. "If someone is looking for me, and I'm not at the parish, they think I'm at the diocese. And if I'm not at the diocese, they think I'm at the parish," he said.



Orinda  
Public  
Meetings

### City Council

Tuesday, Jan. 29, 7 p.m. Special Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 5, 7 p.m. Regular Meeting

Library Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

### Planning Commission

Tuesday, Feb. 12, 7 p.m.

Library Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

### Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Feb. 13, 6:30 p.m.

Sarge Littlehale Community Room,

22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

### Orinda Union High School District Board Meetings

Monday, Feb. 11, 6 p.m.

Regular Board Meeting

8 Altarinda Rd., Orinda

www.orindaschools.org

See also AUHSD meeting page A2