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Wilder Art and Garden Center up and running, or at least walking

By Sora O'Doherty



The Orinda Chamber of Commerce held the first social event at Wilder Art and Garden Center, a mixer for local business people. Photo Sora O'Doherty

Council members Amy Worth and Nick Kosla were in attendance, along with attorney Fran Layton, Bruce Yamamoto representing the developer, Madelyn Mallory, a Wilder resident, City Manager Steve Salomon, Director of Public Works Larry Theis, Associate Planner Jason Chen, and Trimble. The other topics on the agenda were parking enforcement, and extension of the Wilder Subdivision improvement agreement.

Since the opening of play fields four and five, it seems that Wilder has been experiencing parking in areas where parking is not permitted, and the residents, the developer, OGLLC, and the Wilder Homeowners Association have reached out to the city, asking that it take on parking enforcement, even on Wilder's private streets, because of the impact of the city amenities.

Residents who attended the subcommittee meeting expressed frustration at not being able to park at the Wilder mail kiosks and concern about the safety of traffic around the play fields. They complained about illegal parking on Wilder Road and on Bigleaf Road.

HOA president Greg Schwartz thanked the city, noting that the enforcement efforts that have already been put in place by the city have been a tremendous help and the problem has been mitigated "a ton." One resident complained that the Holy Names lacrosse team routinely unloads their players on Wilder Road, and the players then climb over the fence into the play field. Theis noted that if users of the play fields are observed repeatedly violating the traffic and parking regulations, they could lose their deposits, or even their right to use the play fields. Worth noted that the city values the shared facilities and places a high priority on not inconveniencing the Wilder residents. The subcommittee agreed with the enforcement plan which will appear before the full council on April 23.

The subcommittee also discussed the possibility of an access easement over a portion of Bigleaf Road to enable better access to the Art and Garden Center. Although the developer, OGLLC, has offered the city an easement over a parcel which covers the portion of Bigleaf Road up to Paintbrush Lane necessary to access the back driveway of the Center, residents objected on the grounds that the parcel will come into the ownership of the Wilder HOA when the homes are all sold, and they believe that they should have a say in the fate of the parcel.

The topic of the easement is complicated, in part because of the current parking issues along Bigleaf Road and the city's avowed desire to develop a further parking lot close to the back of the Art and Garden Center. This parking lot could be visible to the homes on Coffee Berry Lane. An additional concern, pointed out by some of the residents at the meeting, is that if the parking lot has 25 spaces, and one ADA compliant space, it could induce hundreds of cars to drive up Bigleaf Road to investigate if parking were available. Other concerns included people congregating or partying in the parking lot.

The residents seemed to agree that they were not opposed to the easement in principal, but they did want several things in return. Schwartz said that the HOA had concerns in four areas: financial, liability, landscaping and restrictions on use. Madelyn Mallory said that the residents wanted to control the maintenance of the road, but wanted the city to contribute proportionally to the amount of public use. She also said that residents might be more comfortable with a temporary easement, to see how things go,

The public will once again have an opportunity to visit the Wagner Ranch Nature Area from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday, April 28, for the 2019 Wildlife Festival. The nature area is located near Wagner Ranch Elementary School at 350 Camino Pablo in Orinda. The free event is family-friendly, but according to school district policy, dogs are not allowed in the Nature Area.

The historic ranch and 18-acre nature preserve is rarely open to the public. There will be a variety of activities for all ages, especially kids. Wildlife fun at the Frog Pond will feature red-legged frogs and resident western pond turtle, Mr. T. There will be animals to visit in the garden, including friendly goats and beautiful parrots. In addition, visitors will be able to try hands-on nature arts and crafts, science magic, earth day games, or get a temporary nature tattoo from Coyote Brush. A tour will take in the meadows, woodland, ponds and streams, as well as the historic home site of Theodore Wagner, California's first surveyor general.

before considering a permanent easement. Steve Salomon noted that the idea of the additional parking lot was still in the planning stages, and would not even be a consideration for some years in the future.



Large wood sculpture by Stan Dann on loan to City of Orinda hangs in Art and Garden Center Foyer. Photo Sora O'Doherty

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