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Orinda moves forward with in-lieu parking fees

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda City Council moved ahead with a proposed ordinance allowing businesses to pay fees in lieu of providing the required number of parking spaces for new or remodeled businesses in Orinda downtown commercial and downtown office districts. The ordinance, which will likely take effect on Feb. 20, "gets the word out that Orinda is open for business," according to Council Member Nick Kosla.

The in-lieu fee allows businesses to pay a fee for each reduction in parking spaces, and the fee increases depending on the number of parking spaces omitted. The new fee will be included in the master fee schedule that comes before the council annually, and may be adjusted as required by circumstances. The fee was brought to the council in December, but as presented would have applied to any business within Orinda. The council at that time requested staff to bring the proposal back, but limiting it to the downtown business districts. In-lieu fees apply only to businesses, not to residential property.

The idea behind in-lieu fees is to encourage development within the two downtown business districts, while finding alternative ways to make more parking spaces available. The money from the fees will be used by the city to find alternative parking solutions, which may range from restriping existing parking spaces to increase the number available to leasing space from other property owners.

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