




ORINDA

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Orinda downtown precise plan: RFP fails, staff will do the job

By Sora O'Doherty

Last August the city council directed staff to issue a request for proposals to draft a downtown precise plan for Orinda. Staff reported back to the council on Jan. 7 that the RFP failed. They received only one proposal, despite reaching out to a number of companies seeking their participation. Staff posited three reasons for the failure to respond: the budget was insufficient; concern that the project would be controversial; and limited availability of consultants because there are numerous projects already underway in the area.

Staff suggested two alternatives: either reissue an RFP with a substantially larger

budget and a tightened scope, or manage the project in-house and issue either an RFP and/or a request for qualifications for specific tasks. The second alternative, according to the staff report, will still require an increased budget, but would cost less than the first alternative.

After discussion, the second alternative was adopted by the council. The project will be headed by full-time senior planner Mayank Patel for a period of 18 months. The city will also hire a temporary planner. In response to a question from Council Member Inga Miller about whether staff were concerned about push-back from the public, Planning Director Drummond Buckley said that on the contrary, "we are very excited about doing it in-house, with Mayank Patel in

particular." Buckley added, in response to another question, that he was not concerned about finding a temporary employee. "The desire to get a foot in the door is very high," he said.

A specific plan is a tool defined by state law to allow a customized set of development standards to be legally adopted for a specific property or area. A precise plan is a similar type of document but more loosely defined that allows flexibility in defining the priorities for a specific area. Under the alternative adopted, the precise plan will be completed by the planning staff, with the help of contractors for specific tasks, which might include actually writing up the draft plan.

The advantages of keeping the project in-house, Buckley

stated, include that it will be less costly and that the staff can start work right away, without the delay of another RFP. Council Member Dennis Fay said he was very comfortable with the approach suggested by staff, because it was what he did in his former employment. "You'll be able to start tomorrow?" he asked, and staff agreed that they could.

Buckley said that he has had discussions with Lafayette staff, who utilized their planning commission when they did their downtown plan in-house. It was agreed that the Orinda planning commission should also be involved in the project, as well as the downtown subcommittee of the council.

Amy Worth steps up as Orinda vice mayor for fifth time

By Sora O'Doherty



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Amy Worth begins an historic fifth term as Vice-Mayor of Orinda.

Since being elected in 1998, Amy Worth has never been off

the Orinda City Council, and has been mayor more times than anyone else. For 2020 she will serve in the position of vice mayor for a historic fifth term. Before being elected to the city council, Worth volunteered with the county library, and the Orinda library remains very important to her.

Worth stresses that Orinda has the third lowest budget in Contra Costa County, with only Clayton and Moraga having less money to run their cities. So Worth is very focused on making the best use of the money available to the city. She is proud of the progress made on local roads, but is searching for funds to allow the city to maintain the progress it has made. She serves with Mayor Darlene Gee on the Tax and Revenue Subcommittee that is looking into either extending the current city half cent sales tax or increasing it to one cent. "The key," according to Worth, "is

that Orinda's taxes stay local and are well managed." The subcommittee is currently polling a variety of things that the sales tax could be used for, including roads, public safety, or even daylighting San Pablo Creek.

Worth also sits on subcommittees on transportation, the library, and also liaises with Orinda Union School District and chairing the School Bus Authority for Lamorinda. She is excited to be working with the new manager of the school bus program, Whitney Simon.

Downtown development is a subject much on the minds of Orinda residents, and Worth is no exception. In light of changing state laws, she says, it is very important that the city have a plan. Currently, there is a request for proposal out for writing design standards for downtown Orinda. Worth wants to know how people feel about housing in downtown

Orinda, and notes that Orinda is special because of its access to transportation, making it easy to get to cultural events either in Walnut Creek or in San Francisco. However, she also thinks that the BART board needs to devote more effort to making BART safer. Worth is very involved in transportation issues, and says that people feel safe on County Connection buses, but not on BART, and adds that BART ridership is falling.

Worth, who always makes a point of thanking people for their work on projects that come before the city council, had words of high praise for the city's staff and particularly for City Manager Steve Salomon. One of his accomplishments was organizing city planning for the public safety power shutoffs in the fall. Worth was also impressed with how the Orinda schools handled the days without power.

City of Orinda seeks applications from resident volunteers

Effective this February, there will be term expirations on the Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission, Finance Advisory Committee, Historical Landmarks Committee, Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, Public Works Aesthetic Review Committee and Art in Public Places Committee. Also effective in February, there will be term expirations on the County Mosquito and Vector Control District, County Library Commission, and Contra Costa Transportation Authority Citizen Advisory Committee.

Statement of Interest forms are available from the Orinda City Clerk's Office, 22 Orinda Way, Orinda or by contacting Sheri Smith, City Clerk at (925) 253-4221 or ssmith@cityoforinda.org. Completed Statement of Interest forms should be submitted to the City Clerk's Office by 5 p.m. Feb. 14.

Qualified applicants will be invited to interview before the City Council on Feb. 22.

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community.
 Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorinda weekly.com

No change in Orinda committees and commissions

By Sora O'Doherty

Following the reduction in the number of members of the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee in late 2019, Orinda staff recommended to the city council that other changes could be made to the city's committees and commissions in order to streamline operations. For example, staff suggested, the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee

and the Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission could be combined into one public works commission. However, when suggested to those groups, they were unanimously opposed to the proposition. Additional negative feedback was received from the Public Works Aesthetic Review Committee.

At the Jan. 7 city council meeting, several members of the Art in Public Places Committee spoke out against any

changes to that committee. Ted Urban, who has been involved in the committee since its inception 12 years ago, cited the need for continuity of thought on ongoing projects, and suggested that, while he supports monthly meetings, any reduction should result in no fewer than quarterly meetings. Mayor Darlene Gee complimented the APPC on their "tremendous passion" and added that the CIOC is not

staffed up to do aesthetic work. Vice Mayor Amy Worth noted that without the APPC Orinda would not have "the magnificent art we have." Richard Weston wrote to the city council in support of the APPC, concluding "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," and the council agreed.

Orinda is currently seeking resident volunteers for various committees and commissions, including the APPC. (See box on this Page.)

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 cir-

cumstances. 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.



Orinda Public Meetings

City Council
 Tuesday, Feb. 4, 7 p.m. Regular Meeting
 Library Auditorium, Orinda
 Library, 26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission
 Tuesday, Jan. 28, 7 p.m.
 Library Auditorium,
 Orinda Library, 26
 Orinda Way

Parks & Recreation Commission
 Wednesday, Feb. 12, 7 p.m.
 Community Center Room #7,
 28 Orinda Way, Orinda

Orinda Union High School District Board Meetings
 Monday, Feb. 10, 6 p.m.
 Regular Board Meeting
 8 Altarinda Rd., Orinda
 www.orindaschools.org
 See also AUHSD meeting page A2