

Letters to the editor

The issue of Orinda storm drains

Re: "Orinda Takes Deep Dive Into Storm Drains." Actually, it was a shallow dive. According to its Public Works Director, Orinda has "hundreds/possibly thousands" of private storm drains (i.e., storm drains under or across private property) that connect to its public storm drains, yet the city refuses to repair, maintain, or even inspect those private drains. It doesn't even have a complete inventory of them. If Orinda has a legal right to use the private storm drains, then it has a concomitant legal and common-sense obligation to inspect, repair and maintain them. If Orinda

lacks any such legal right, do the owners have the right to prevent Orinda from using them? Orinda has no plan to deal with either possibility. It needs a plan.

Also, the Orinda Council knew and was told a year ago (by the undersigned) that the approximate cost of repairing the public storm drains would be \$30 million, and that funding would need to be secured. Yet it has apparently done nothing in the last year to develop a plan to raise the money, other than a flawed survey that grouped essential storm drain (and road) improvements with optional improvements to the creek. At the risk of mixing metaphors, the Orinda

Council has its head in the sand on this issue. It needs to do better.

Nick Waranoff
Orinda

A thank you regarding Measure M

On behalf of more than 150 volunteers, Moraga School District Superintendent Bruce Burns, and our entire campaign committee, we would like to thank the community of Moraga for supporting our public schools and passing Measure M.

From the Yes on M Campaign Committee

Spring sports suspended in Acalanes Union High School District

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It was not an easy decision for Rafeh and the administrative team at Bentley to make. "We have been meeting every day and considering every alternative, such as playing without fans and only playing league games, but in the interest of all the kids and with all the recommendations of social distancing, we just decided to suspend all of our athletic teams. It all kept coming back to the health and safety of everyone."

Ironically, within an hour of Bentley's suspension of their athletic program, the NBA canceled the rest of its season. "So goes Bentley athletics, so goes the NBA," said Rafeh with more than a little

irony and pride.

What happens at the end of spring break for Bentley? "That hard to answer right now," said Rafeh. "We're waiting for direction from the governing bodies and listening to the health authorities and will see how things progress. We just all have to feel it's safe to get out there."

Rafeh's empathy was for the senior student-athletes. "For most of them, this is the end of their athletic careers and they won't get to play at the next level and beyond. A lot of our kids were stunned after having put in so much work for their sport. However, when the NBA canceled the rest of their season, our players seemed to see that it does make sense for us to put a pause on things."

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City reacts to state law changes regarding accessory dwelling units

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FAR cannot be used to reduce an ADU to below 800 square feet. The city cannot require replacement parking when a garage is converted to an ADU, but can require one parking space per ADU, with some exceptions, such as if an ADU is within one-half mile from transit. The ordinance also eliminates impact fees for units smaller than 750 square feet and imposes a proportionality requirement of fees for units larger than 750 square feet. Processing time was reduced from 120 days to 60 days.

Council Member Nick Kosla asked Buckley if two-

story ADUs are allowed. Buckley said that the answer is confusing, because there are different rules governing the conversion of an existing structure. Buckley said that discretionary review, as opposed to ministerial, is only allowed if an ADU results in buildings exceeding the FAR, which is the relationship between the total amount of usable floor area of buildings and the total area of the lot on which the buildings stand.

Kosla asked, "So no discretionary process for a two-story ADU?" Buckley explained that it would be allowable to establish a 16-foot maximum for all ADUs, which would effectively prohibit

two-story ADUs. Kosla also asked about using landscaping to screen ADUs, but Buckley noted that with only four feet to the lot line, there isn't a lot of space for landscaping. He added that the planning commission has recommended that the city council adopt a 16-foot limit for all ADUs.

David Hop urged the council to allow 1,200 square feet, two-bedroom ADUs. He said that he and his wife live on a large lot in a home that covers five levels. They want to downsize, but also want to have enough space to entertain large family groups. Chris Kniel urged the council to challenge the state law.

Buckley said it would be possible to have an ADU of 1,300 square feet with design review. Kosla suggested that Orinda could limit ADUs to one story, but allow larger, two-story units with discretionary approval. When Vice Mayor Amy Worth asked what the process would be for an ADU on top of a garage, Buckley said that the state has not said anything about building over a garage. Worth also asked if it would be possible to allow ADUs up to 27 feet with design review, and Buckley said he thought it would be okay "if it applies to all buildings."

City Attorney Osa Wolff suggested that the city should

conform the requirements for accessory structures to those for ADUs because accessory structures can be easily converted to ADUs, and, even without conversion, it is possible for people to live in accessory structures. She added that further research is required to determine exactly what may be allowable. Worth agreed that she sees the wisdom of having the same requirements for accessory structures as for ADUs. After further research, the matter will return to the council on April 7.



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CASTLE GATE NEIGHBORHOOD | 16 OAK COURT, ORINDA | 5 BD | 4 BA | 3749 SQFT | .49 ACRE



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