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November election features 1% sales tax, contested city council race

By *Sora O'Doherty*

Orinda mayor Darlene Gee and past mayor Inga Miller are running for reelection to the city council, having fulfilled their current four-year terms. A new candidate has also filed and will appear on the ballot: Latika Malkani.

The city council at its Aug. 4 meeting also approved putting a 1% sales tax on the general election ballot. Finance Director Paul Rankin told the city council that 63% of cities in Contra Costa County have sales taxes, that 50% of them have higher taxes than Orinda, and that Moraga already has a 1% sales tax. If passed, the measure would also rescind the current half-cent sales tax.

Although it is a general tax and cannot be limited to specific allocations, the council indicated that it is their intention to focus on priority needs for the first three to five years of the tax, which is to last for 20 years. Those priorities are wildfire management and disaster planning, high priority drainage structures, and continued public street maintenance.

The mayor and the vice mayor were authorized to prepare the ballot argument in favor of the tax, as well as the rebuttal to any argument against. If approved, collection of the tax will begin on April 1, 2021.

In other developments, past presidents of the Orinda Union School District Board Hilary Weiner and Cara Hoxie are also running for re-election, but are unopposed, so there will be no OUSD election on the November ballot.

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