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Orinda garbage rates to increase by nearly 7%

By Sora O'Doherty

An increase in fees for garbage collection for Orinda residents will include an increase to the vehicle impact/street maintenance component charged by Orinda to RecycleSmart, which is passed on to rate payers. The proposed increase in Vehicle Impact Fees will increase annual pavement maintenance funding available by an estimated \$117,882 to maintain public streets.

The fee for garbage collection will impact rate-payers differently depending on the size of the containers they use, but will range from about \$3 to \$6.46 per month, with the majority of rate-payers at the lower end of the increase. For those with a 20-gallon trash container, the rates will increase from \$44.67 to \$47.69 per month, and for those with a 32-gallon container, the rate will go up from \$51.05 to \$54.50 per month. The large majority of Orinda residents use those two sized containers. For the few who do use a 64-gallon container, the rate will go up \$6.46, from \$95.77 per month to \$102.23. Commercial rates will also increase by about \$40 to \$60 per month.

The rate increase is for trash collection; there is no additional charge for recycling pickup, although it is the recycling portion of the collection that accounts for the increase, according to the city council. This began in 2019 when China stopped receiving recycling materials from the United States and, as a result, local governments stopped receiving income from the sale of recycling.

In public comments on the proposed fee hike, Charles Porges complained, "The most important issues are always the last on the agenda." He explained his position: "All of these funds are for public road maintenance. This is again hitting private road residents with a fee that they will get no benefit from." He urged the city council to take steps to address the inequity and allow private roads to become public. Porges asked the council, "What are you going to do?" Porges said that he has provided the council with a letter outlining the steps he believes are necessary, beginning with a study of private road conditions. The private roads supporter said he was very disappointed, after having given the council seven action items. Mayor Darlene Gee responded that she realized this is an important issue to Porges and many others and that the council is looking at its upcoming agendas.

If the charges are approved by the Joint Powers Authority, the rate increase will take effect in March 2021.

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