



Published February 17th, 2021

Orinda appoints new oversight commission to monitor sales tax spending

By Sora O'Doherty

When Orinda voters agreed on a new, increased sales tax, part of the equation was the formation of a new oversight committee that will monitor how the sales tax funds are being spent by the city. To accomplish this goal, the city disbanded the existing Citizen's Infrastructure Oversight Commission and has now appointed 10 members of the Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission (SSTOC).

Over the course of a weekend, the city council spent a day and a half interviewing 40 applicants for the new Commission. At the Feb. 2 city council meeting they announced that the following members have been selected: Kyle Arteaga, Brad Barber, Chris Decareau (a former CIOC Commissioner), Jud Hammon (the immediate past chair of the CIOC), Rochelle Latimer, Yasmin Lee, Melanie Light, Latika Malkani, Paula Reinman and Alex Weinstein. Hammon was named temporary chair of the new commission, which is to select a chair the first time they meet.

Mayor Amy Worth expressed the council's thanks to all applicants, saying the city is "so fortunate to have so many outstanding applicants." She noted that it was a tough decision, but that the council worked hard "to establish a balance, to incorporate diversity and to select members with a variety of experiences."

In December the city council took steps to establish the commission, as was required by the election measure adopting the new supplemental sales tax. The 10-member commission will meet at least quarterly and set a regular meeting schedule. The primary objectives and purposes of the commission will be, with respect to revenue generated from the voter approved sales tax, to make recommendations and provide advice to the city council and city staff on planned expenditures for priority programs, services and projects and to review, monitor, and report on the expenditures incurred. Priority programs, services, and projects are to include efforts to reduce the threat of wildfire, disaster planning and emergency response, critical public storm drainage infrastructure, and long-term road repair and maintenance.

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