



See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:
www.cityoforinda.org
Phone (925) 253-4200
Chamber of Commerce:
www.orindachamber.org
The Orinda Association:
www.orindaassociation.org

Orinda Public Meetings

City Council

Special Meeting:

Thursday, March 25, 7 p.m. By Teleconference Only

Regular Meeting:

TBA

Planning Commission

Tuesday, March 23, 7 p.m. By Teleconference Only

- ◆ HARDWOODS
- ◆ CARPETS
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- ◆ LINOLEUM
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Orinda downtown development swings toward greater housing density, taller buildings

By Sora O'Doherty

Downtown development continues to be a focus of Orinda government, and the city council received an update on March 2, which was followed by another on March 16, and then, perhaps, action in April. Planning Director Drummond Buckley told the council that the city is unlikely to add housing in an amount sufficient to bring substantial new retail to downtown Orinda, but yet must consider it in order to meet state demands that cities provide for housing.

Outgoing city manager Steve Salomon, retiring next month, said that the elephant in the downtown planning room is the juggernaut in Sacramento. State government continues, and will continue, in Salomon's opinion, to demand that cities provide for more housing and if they fail to do so, the cities run the risk of losing land use control to the state.

"We know we have to meet RHNA requirements, we want to improve downtown; how do we fit these together?" mused Buckley, concluding, "If we don't plan carefully, it could be a real mess."

Jason Moody, the city consultant from Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. presented to the council the Economic Analysis for the Orinda Downtown Precise Plan containing economic analysis, build-out assumptions, and potential building height increases. He explained that because Orinda is mostly built out now, development would have to occur on already developed parcels, and the cost of land acquisition and assembly is a major factor.

"You need more density than you already have to incentivize development, but higher density is likely to be infeasible without the density bonus," he told the council, "except the Masonic Cen-

ter which is likely feasible without density bonus." Although increased density would likely not increase the total amount of retail, Moody thought that it might result in better retail, increased assessed values, and increased retail sales in the downtown area.

In public comments, Nick Waranoff branded the city council as "absolutely heartless" to existing businesses and urged it to defund the downtown development process. Charles Porges agreed with Waranoff, but Matt Fogerty said, "I welcome redevelopment of downtown and having higher density." Forgarty said he has lived in Orinda for 20 years and believes that higher density housing and more retail will improve downtown.

In council discussion, Council Member Inga Miller described downtown development as a complicated process. "We need to look at the numbers suggested. We

have a huge RHNA number to accommodate," she said, that caused her to be "increasingly concerned that we don't lose having restaurants in our community, or losing a grocery store. I would hate to see where we are forced to get rid of retail because we have to accommodate housing for people to work in San Francisco.

"We don't need an Apple store," she concluded, "but you should at least be able to buy an apple in Orinda!"

Vice Mayor Dennis Fay questioned how Orinda can protect existing businesses.

Mayor Amy Worth commented that Proposition 19, which limits tax benefits for certain transfers of real property between family members, will have a huge impact on this. Costs to maintain the buildings under Proposition 13 have been very low. Any property that was going to be transferred had to be transferred by Jan. 15.

Miramonte students return to city council to urge ban on Styrofoam

By Sora O'Doherty

After clarifying that the Contra Costa County ban on Styrofoam takeout food containers only applies to the unincorporated areas of the county, a group of students intent on banning such containers in Orinda returned to ask the city council again to consider such a ban. In addition to the county ban, 10 cities in the county have also instituted such bans.

Mayor Amy Worth asked to meet with members of the student group via Zoom, and frequent contributor to the public forum, Nick Waranoff, a retired attorney, volunteered to help the students draft a proposed ordinance for the council.

The group of students from Miramonte High School addressed the city council on various aspects of the problem. Devon Bradley talked about the county ordinance, and the other 10 cities in the county that have already

banned polystyrene food containers, commonly called by the trade name, Styrofoam.

The Miramonte Environmental Club has been running a community-funded project launched last July to promote environmental sustainability and help restaurants during the pandemic. Since restaurants have been conducting their business solely through takeout, they are having to purchase more takeout supplies and most of these materials are made from plastic. The group has been donating compostable takeout supplies to restaurants since July, and has raised over \$1,100 dollars so far.

Sheng Shu, who read from the CCC Ordinance, suggested that the county legislation can be used as inspiration for Orinda and said that the students were working hard on draft legislation that should be ready by the next city council meeting.

Leo Cardozo informed the council of the results of an informal survey conducted by the students on Feb. 6 when they were delivering environmentally friendly food packaging to 21 restaurants in Orinda. Of the 21 restaurants surveyed, only four reported that they are still using Styrofoam. Those four restaurants are Europa, Baja Cali, Serika, and Sushi Island. Cardozo said that there might be a couple more, but the actual number of restaurants affected by the ban would be small because most have already stopped using Styrofoam takeout material.

Joseph Manio talked about how to implement the ban and incentivize compliance. He told the council that the project can supply local restaurants with compostable containers through the rest of the pandemic, having recently obtained support from Sustainable Lafayette.

Miramonte sophomore Alexis DeBusschere, the granddaughter of Dan DeBusschere, a frequent attendee at city council meetings, informed the council that Styrofoam is not recyclable anywhere around the world, and talked about the deleterious effects of the material, which winds up being ingested by fish and humans.

Worth explained that the council could hear comments but could not legally discuss the issue until it is placed on a city council agenda, but she invited the students to arrange to meet with her in a Zoom meeting.

Waranoff asked the students to be sure to include food trucks operating in Orinda in the draft proposed ordinance because, he said, the city has already given them a very large advantage over brick and mortar restaurants.

More information on the student project, is available at heartorinda.org.

Orinda launches all-email Poul Anderson writing contest



By Sora O'Doherty

The Poul Anderson Creative Writing Contest is now open to all students who reside and/or attend high school in Orinda. The contest is run by the Friends of the Orinda Library and is named in honor of the late Poul Anderson, a popular science-fiction writer and Orinda resident, who was a friend to the community for 40 years. For the first time this year, entries

will be accepted by email only, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As in the past, there are four categories: Science Fiction/Fantasy, Essay/Memoir/Biography, Poetry and Short Story. Students may

submit one entry in any of the four categories for a total of not more than three entries. The deadline for submission is Friday, April 16 at noon.

Entries will be evaluated by a panel of local judges who are involved professionally in reading, writing or publishing. Up to four winners will each be awarded \$500 prizes at the close of this school year, underwritten by the Friends of the Orinda Library.

All electronic submissions must be Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF attachments. No Google Doc or Dropbox links will be accepted. Electronic submissions must be emailed to contest@friendsoftheorindalibrary.org

More information is available of the Friends of the Orinda Library website, <http://friendsoftheorindalibrary.org>

Lamorinda Idol contestants undeterred by pandemic

By Sora O'Doherty

The Lamorinda Arts Council hosted a live, online event March 14 to announce the winners of the latest Lamorinda Idol contest. Finalists in categories including kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth grade, sixth through eighth grade and high school were named by the Lamorinda Arts Council in January. There were over 90 entries, some individuals, some groups, competing as soloists or groups. Videos of competition final perfor-

mances were then made available on YouTube. Public voting was open until March 10.

The audience award is given to the participant who is not a category winner but had the highest number of public votes, adjusted for category size and number of total category votes. Winners were selected by a panel of three judges, and will receive cash prizes ranging from \$100 to \$400.

The Lamorinda Idol event, chaired by Steve Harwood, was open for the first time to all students in Contra Costa

County and was judged by "a total of eight judges," according to Harwood, "all with musical backgrounds; the judges have been assigned three to a category; and the combined votes of the three judges determined the finalists in each category."

Available videos include full performances, as well as short compilation videos with a 30-second clip of each singer in each category. Videos of the finalists can be viewed at <https://lamorindaarts.org/lamorinda-idol-winter-finalists/>

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