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**City of Orinda:**  
www.cityoforinda.org  
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**Chamber of Commerce:**  
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**The Orinda Association:**  
www.orindaassociation.org

**Orinda Public Meetings**

**City Council**

**Regular Meeting:**

Tuesday, Oct. 5, 7 p.m.

By Teleconference Only

**Planning Commission**

Tuesday, Oct. 12, 7 p.m.

By Teleconference Only

**Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission**

Wednesday, Oct. 13, 6:30 p.m.

By Teleconference Only

# Orinda gears up for first commercial development since Theatre Square

By Sora O'Doherty

After standing vacant for decades, 25A Orinda Way will finally become a construction site. The retail development named “The Station” is scheduled to break ground this fall. In one of his last official acts, departing Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Works Larry Theis presented the city council with a staff report on Sept. 7 outlining the steps that will be necessary to complete the mixed-use project. ZCON Builders will be the primary construction contractor to erect the new building and make new utility connections.

Developer Paul Ugenti and Charles Zaksorn, owner of ZCON Builders attended the meeting. They assured the city that if there was a requirement to name the city as an “also insured,” there would be no problem doing that. Zaksorn is an Orinda resident and ZCON Builders has built over a billion dollars of projects, including high-density housing, mixed-use developments, residential, commercial, industrial, and community projects in the Bay Area and Northern California.

The construction work will require closure of the sidewalk and street parking for the duration of the project, estimated to require 18 months. The construction site will be fenced off, including the sidewalk and parking



Orinda Library

Image courtesy city of Orinda, modified by Lamorinda Weekly

**Construction site on Orinda Way across from the Orinda Library**

spaces as well as extending into the adjoining property, 25 Orinda Way.

Although both lanes of traffic on Orinda Way will be largely unaffected, there will be a need to close the southbound lane of traffic on about 70 individual days for a partial or whole shift. This will allow for material deliveries, concrete pumping, and crane-related activities. The contractor will use flaggers to direct traffic for alternating use of the northbound lane during the closures.

Theis presented the council with a detailed, compre-

hensive list of traffic controls and a logistics narrative, which were prepared by the developer and construction contractor and which can be viewed in the agenda packet on the Orinda website. Lane closures will be limited to weekdays, but ending early on Thursdays to accommodate the food truck event held at the Community Center, across the street from the construction site.

Since Orinda Way was recently repaved, the construction will occur under a moratorium that requires the builder to restore the road af-

ter any construction disruption. Council Member Nick Kosla expressed gratitude to the developer for bringing Orinda its first commercial project in decades. Mayor Amy Worth noted that Orinda Intermediate School students are already doing a project on the new development, and have been inquiring what kind of food will be served there. “They are ready to come in,” Worth proclaimed. The development will be situated directly across the street from the Orinda Library and Community Center.

# SSTOC issues initial report and recommendations to Orinda

By Sora O'Doherty

When Orinda voters passed Measure R in November 2020, it put big, but perhaps, subtle changes in play. Orinda residents agreed to tax themselves for two big goals: working on the city’s roads, and, even more urgently, trying to make the city fire safe. The Citizens’ Infrastructure Oversight Committee was replaced by the Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission (SSTOC), required by the

measure to monitor how Orinda spent the new revenue.

In early 2021, the city council appointed 10 residents – Jud Hammon, Chairman; Chris Decareau; Melanie Light; Paula Reinman; Brad Barber; Yasaman Lee; Latika Malkani; Alex Weinstein, Rachele Latimer and original member Kyle Arteaga, who moved out of the area and has not yet been replaced – to the SSTOC. At the Sept. 21 city council meeting on Zoom, Mayor Amy Worth remarked that it was the first time that she could recall when all the members of a commission were in attendance.

Since March 2021, the Commission has been meeting monthly in open public meetings. In addition, they held a half-day open public planning workshop to develop a focused work plan on reduction of wildfire risk and emergency preparedness, which featured presentations from several community partners, including MOFD Fire Chief Dave Winnacker and Fire Marshal Jeff Isaacs, Lamorinda CERT, the Firewise Council, and the then-current Orinda police chief, David Cook. There was also a presentation about the wildfire risk mitigation plan developed by the City of Los Gatos.

The SSTOC presented the city council with two sets of recommendations, nine items for immediate or near-term action, and six items for long-term or multi-year consideration, with the following suggestions to be tackled first: The city should hire and train an additional dedicated staff member to provide “boots on the ground” support for wildfire risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and home hardening efforts; effect roadside fuel reduction and vegetation management, particularly along evacuation routes; create a vegetation and structure inventory of city and residential properties in order to utilize novel com-

puter modeling of fire in the Wildland Urban Interface; continue to clear city property to comply with MOFD Fire Code, and budget and plan for annual clearance; and explore alternate funding to incentivize residents to achieve fuel reduction, home hardening, and emergency preparedness.

The six long-term goals the commission recommended are developing a matrix for success which includes periodic goals for residential compliance, a vegetation maintenance schedule and improved emergency preparedness, enhancing relations with agencies with overlapping interests, such as EBMUD, PG&E, East Bay Regional Parks, and Caltrans; educating landscapers, nurseries, and garden centers regarding Orinda regulations, standards and best practices, continuing to update city ordinances to reflect MOFD’s continuing efforts to strengthen the Fire Code and Building Code; developing and implement a plan to help Orinda homeowners maintain affordable fire and hazard insurance; and adopting an environmental plan to address climate change locally.

Hammon said while the city is just getting started on fire safety, it must prepare for the high risk of a wildfire starting outside the city that could result in a deadly conflagration within the town. He expressed concern that many Orinda residents are not as well informed or prepared as they need to be and noted that there are three key goals: wildfire risk reduction, saving property and saving lives. “Orinda faces a situation not a lot different than Oakland 30 years ago.”

In 1991 a large suburban wildland-urban interface conflagration on the hillsides of Orinda’s neighbors, Oakland and Berkeley, killed 25 people and injured 150 others. The fire burned 1,520 acres, destroying over 3,000

homes and caused billions of dollars in economic loss. Council Member Inga Miller noted that one of the precursors of that fire was a severe frost that caused the die off of eucalyptus trees. She pointed to the current drought and die off of trees, noting that EBMUD is now working on removing dead and dying trees. She suggested outreach to the East Bay Regional Parks District and other nearby communities. Hammon said that while they have met with a number of organizations, it was not clear whether that was the role of the commission or the city.

Council Member Nick Kosla asked how the work on roads and drainage will intertwine with the work on fire safety, and Hammon responded that he expects the first two years of the commission’s work to be devoted to fire safety. Vice Mayor Dennis Fay said that he attended virtually all the SSTOC meetings. He raised a concern that the city may not be able to enforce the MOFD code.

Hammon, addressing the compliance issue, said that voluntary compliance is the best, cheapest, and quickest way to implement the fire code. “We need a public-private partnership,” he said, pointing out that Orinda is right over the hill from Berkeley, which is often an incubator for plans from the university staff or students. For example, UC Berkeley has a program to develop a computer program to model wildfire through the wildland-urban interface. It needs a lot of detail, he said, requiring private property owners to provide detailed information about what is on their land.

City manager David Biggs said that the state of California will be rolling out funding for low- and moderate-income housing to help with home hardening this coming January.

The entire report, including many links to resources, is available as part of the city council agenda at <http://orindaca.iqm2.com/Citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=1&ID=1936&Inline=True>

# New Orinda police chief named

Lt. Ryan Sullivan took the reins as Orinda’s police chief on Sept. 20, replacing outgoing Chief David Cook. A story featuring Sullivan will run in our Oct. 13 issue.

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