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The Orinda Association:
 www.orindaassociation.org

City Council

Regular Meeting:
 Tuesday, April 5, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only
Planning Commission
 Tuesday, April 5, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only
Traffic Safety Advisory Committee Regular Meeting
 Monday, April 18, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only

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Orinda looks to other counties for emergency preparedness inspiration

By Sora O'Doherty

How is Orinda doing on clearing roadside vegetation? How should homeowners be encouraged to comply with the new fire code? Which is better, the carrot or the stick? Do other counties have the answers? These were some of the questions considered by the Orinda City Council and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District at a joint meeting on March 16. MOFD Chief Dave Winnacker reviewed the requirements of the new fire code. He stressed that MOFD seeks voluntary compliance, and that priority is given to evacuation routes.

City Manager David Biggs noted that the city has the ability to enforce rules for traffic purposes, but not for fire purposes. He added that he has spoken with Assembly Member Rebecca Bauer-Kahan and Sen. Steve Glazier to see if there could be a legislative fix that would allow the city to have a greater role in enforcing the fire code.

Council Member Darlene Gee asked if there are areas or places where clearance of vegetation is considered a problem, to which Winnacker re-

sponded that Orinda is very far from having taken care of the vegetation problem. "Very few neighborhoods have achieved clearance," he stated. Biggs did add that the city has addressed property it owns, and has institutionalized the deadline to assure compliance each year.

Council Member Amy Worth asked about the fire district's plan, what is the strategy for dealing with homes on high-priority evacuation routes? Winnacker replied that the district will send out early notifications to all residents, but those on evacuation routes will get targeted notifications.

The district will shift from its current chipping efforts to inspections and sending out violation notices, which will include language about maintenance of evacuation routes if the property is located on one. However, he added, "I have met with the owners of some parcels in their driveways, and their property is still not in compliance.

"We are willing to enforce," he said, "especially on evacuation routes." Postcards will go out in April, personalized letters will go out to those on evacuation routes in May,

and enforcement will begin on June 1.

In terms of enforcement, Vice Mayor Inga Miller noted that she had heard that there has been some non-voluntary work performed and paid for by MOFD, with liens being placed on properties. Winnacker agreed that there have been some cases, but very few.

Paula Reinman, a member of the Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission, joined the meeting to comment that she had just spoken with Rich Shortall, executive coordinator of Fire Safe Marin. He said that the most effective thing that they are doing is a home evaluation program run through the fire district, with home inspections being conducted by uniformed staff. She reported that Shortall said that this has driven compliance more than anything else they have done.

Winnacker said that MOFD has a very similar program with volunteers that is up and running. The volunteers wear vests, and it is a more effective program, he said, coming from a trusted source, a friend or a neighbor. The program will be expanded in the future. How-

ever, he emphasized that it is really important that homeowners receive consistent messages from the same person every time. "Any inconsistency," he noted, "becomes just one more item to be used to avoid doing the work."

MOFD Director Craig Jorgens added that MOFD also helps neighbors with Firewise councils. Biggs wondered how Orinda can get more Firewise communities, how the city and the fire district might help to encourage that. Worth suggested that if the goal is to increase compliance, the city and the fire district should pursue joint communication tools to maximize the message.

The meeting concluded with a determination to work more closely together, perhaps with the creation of a 2x2 committee of the Orinda City Council and MOFD, as Orinda has with the school board. Council Member Nick Kosla also favored more joint meetings, and MOFD President Michael Donner suggested that more than annual meetings are needed. Mayor Dennis Fay suggested that they create the 2x2 committee, let them work, then schedule another joint meeting.

Miramonte High School principal shares his support of the arts

By Sora O'Doherty

In the face of some social media speculation that Miramonte High School will be dropping musical theater classes next year, Principal Ben Campopiano spoke to the Lamorinda Weekly about his whole-hearted support for the arts as part of the high school curriculum. Every student who wants a choral music/musical theater class will be able to get one, he affirmed, but he noted that de-

clining enrollment coupled with fewer students who want to take these classes may mean that there are fewer total classes in the area.

"Every kid who wants musical theater will be in a class," Campopiano said. "We have got to have a strong arts program; it's critically important. Even with ebbs and flows of enrollment. In a comprehensive high school I am committed to that, and I will dedicate funds to that," he added. "I really support

the arts and it is critically important for every student to have what they need. If they want it, they are going to get it," was Campopiano's bottom line.

The principal did acknowledge that there is a lot of pressure on students to take the classes they believe will get them into the high-achieving colleges they seek. "Competition is so great to get into these colleges," he said, "I have to fill my schedule with top level classes."

Tri-City Council meeting focuses on transportation issues

... continued from Page A1

Through the public meetings, of which there will be two more rounds, CCTA is seeking comments about most important initiatives that can be taken over the next 25 years. There is also an interactive exercise on its website.

Early explained that the concept of a route of regional significance is unique to Contra Costa County, not to be found in state or federal legislation. Of the five action plans in Contra Costa County, only Lamorinda has routes of inter-regional significance. Early advised that these should be changed to routes of regional significance, to avoid having multiple confusing designations.

He suggested that the designation might also give a little boost to grant applications.

Orinda Vice Mayor Inga Miller, while noting that communities are no longer permitted to disallow a housing development on the basis of inadequate roadway capacity, wondered if there will be funding opportunities, and that an-

swer was that there will be funds available over the next 10 years.

Moraga Town Council Member Teresa Onoda brought up the issue of planning for wildfires. Matt Kelly, Contra Costa County Senior Transportation Planner, said that CCTA is hearing about that, especially from Lamorinda, so they are trying to incorporate fire into the transportation plan.

Early said that Placeworks is working on a project specific to the city of Orinda to quantify evacuation capacity and that it may become a model for other communities. He also answered a question from the Lamorinda Weekly, explaining that in an evacuation there will be a carefully controlled flow of cars and that making the roads one-way out will allow for increased capacity.

There was also some discussion about whether traffic patterns will change in the future, as a result of behaviors developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kelly said that CCTA is trying to figure that out in a travel behavior study,

and Orinda Mayor Dennis Fay wished them good luck in "getting people to tell you what they really think they are going to do."

Lafayette Mayor Teresa Geringer stressed that their city is committed to a traffic safety plan. Early agreed, saying that safety is of the utmost importance and will be reflected in the action plan. Worth added that all three communities are very concerned about bicycle and pedestrian safety.

The Action Plans and Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP) will be updated over the next two years. While the CTP Update will be informed by the Action Plan Updates, there will be combined outreach events that provide stakeholders and the public with opportunities to provide input on both. The Action Plan Updates and CTP Update process is anticipated to be completed by fall 2023.

Residents can learn more about the Contra Costa County action plan, get involved, and share their thoughts at ccta.net/ctp



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