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## Orinda rejects electrification ordinance, for now

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda City Council considered, but rejected, an ordinance that would have required all new residential and retail construction in the city to be fully electric. Overall, the council considered that the ordinance was not yet necessary for the city, which is likely to fall under a state-wide provision soon, and might have a negative effect on building projects currently underway.

The purpose of electrification ordinances is to reduce greenhouse gasses and climate change. Contra Costa County already has an electrification ordinance, but it does not apply to the city. The cities of Lafayette and Moraga are currently considering adopting electrification ordinances, but have not yet done so.

Orinda Planning Director, Drummond Buckley, said that it is expected that the state of California will adopt an electrification ordinance three years after the next building code, which become effective in January 2023.

Buckley also clarified what would not be affected by an electrification ordinance in Orinda. The proposed ordinance would only apply to new residential and retail construction, but would not apply to remodels. Also, in the purposes of electrification, restaurants and swimming pools are not considered retail operations. Damian Hardman-Saldana, of Contra Costa County was also on hand at the Sept. 27 meeting to answer council questions. He explained that the county sees electrification as cost efficient, adding that all low income developments are already all-electric because it is more cost efficient to build. When Vice Mayor Inga Miller asked why the county did not include restaurants, Hardman-Saldana explained that the state of California does not yet have a cost efficiency study for restaurants, and also that the city of Berkeley is being sued by restaurants over their electrification ordinance.

Several members of the community submitted written comments opposing adoption of the ordinance. Nick Waranoff urged the city not to put all of its energy "eggs" into one "basket." He referred to public safety power shutoffs, suggesting that the electric grid does not yet have sufficient capacity to support electrification, and may be hampered in the future to the extent that hydraulic power production may be affected by drought conditions in the state. He also noted that the national power grid is susceptible to terrorist attacks and hackers. Melanie Light also suggested that the proposed ordinance might have unintended consequences. She, like Waranoff, pointed out that during power outages, it is convenient to have gas to cook with and heat homes, if necessary. The California Restaurant Association also opposed the proposed ordinance.

In council discussion, Council Member Nick Kosla pointed out that there is currently a delay of months for electric installation for new homes. "This needs to marinate a little longer," he said. "Climate change is a world issue. California has done a great job, with a massive population we can make a difference," he added. Council Member Amy Worth agreed that the goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is important, and that the city is doing it in places that they can. Council Member Darlene Gee also agreed that it is clear that the state is heading this way, but added, "We don't have a lot going on right now that is going to benefit from us taking action right now. At this point," she said, "I am not interested in changing ordinances just for the city of Orinda." Miller asked staff to keep an eye on developments in the area of electrification.

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[back](#)

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