



See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
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Chamber of Commerce:
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The Orinda Association:
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City Council

Regular Meeting:

Tuesday, Oct. 18, 7 p.m.

By Teleconference Only

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Oct. 25, 7 p.m.

By Teleconference Only

Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Oct. 12, 6:30 p.m.

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Six candidates vie to fill three seats on the Orinda City Council

By Sora O'Doherty

Outgoing city manager Janet Keeter, who left in 2017, marveled about the incredible quality of volunteers in Orinda, and the 2022 general election is proving her right again. At a candidates' forum on Oct. 6, all the candidates agreed that whoever wins the election will be great for Orinda. During the nearly two-hour forum, the candidates answered questions from the public on a wide range of issues affecting Orinda. They also responded to a set of questions posed to them separately by The Lamorinda Weekly. The candidates forum was sponsored by the Orinda Association and the Orinda News and moderated by the League of Women Voters, Diablo Valley chapter.

All of the candidates had positive views of the Down-

town Precise Plan, although candidate Brandyn Iverson believes that the city should modify the DPP to create overlay districts alternative to "the state's one-note 'density for affordability' incentive." A common thread in their answers was the need to provide affordable housing for Orinda's schoolteachers, firefighters, and city personnel. Stuart House emphasized that he has been encouraged to run for city council instead of the Orinda Union School District board to promote interface between the city and the school board. He is particularly interested in housing for teachers and seniors.

Alex Drexel, the former chair and current commissioner of the Orinda Parks and Recreation, who was appointed by the mayor of Oakland to the Oakland Civil Service Board where he worked to balance

interest of city workers, community and taxpayers to find just outcomes, suggested that Orinda needs campaign finance reform, so that candidates wouldn't need to raise about \$20,000 to run for a volunteer position.

On the subject of BART parking, the candidates were also unanimous in expressing the need for solutions. Latika Malkani suggested sheltered bike paths and increased bike storage at BART. Janet Riley agreed and suggested that bike storage should provide for electric bicycles as well. She also suggested expanding the park and ride facilities to additional church parking lots. Stuart House is a proponent of the Smart Parking Initiative, which uses an internet-based interface to enable people to reserve parking spaces up to two weeks in advance. Alex Drexel added that in addition

to shuttle services, Orinda should leverage ride share applications, and Sunil Rajaraman added that the city needs to find ways to lessen traffic on Moraga Way through community rideshare options.

The six candidates offer a wealth of experience in different fields. Attorney Malkani noted that she hopes to accomplish what in large part motivated her initial 2020 council bid: to govern from her lived experience "which has given me a liking for results that are good and just, for acknowledging bias and looking for bias interrupters, for caring for today's children and tomorrow's environment." Malkani serves on the Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission that is guiding the use of the funds raised by the new tax to improve Orinda's wildfire safety and for other uses.

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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 that 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, restaur-

ants 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.

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No evident progress on Wilder stalemate, matter continued

By Sora O'Doherty

Having found for the first time that the developer of Wilder is in default on Aug. 16, the Orinda City Council took up the matter again on Sept. 27, but found little new and nothing to change the determination of default. However, Michael Olson, speaking on behalf of Brookside Land Company, said that he would be meeting with Orinda City Manager David Biggs in early October and hoped to resolve some of the issues relating to the completion of the Wilder project. The matter returned to the council on Oct. 11, after

press time.

In August the city council received a letter from an attorney for OG LLC, stating that the developer had run out of funds and would not be completing the tasks remaining to finish the development. Olson had said that the letter had been a mistake, although agreeing that the developer did run out of funds.

Chief among the remaining tasks is the construction of the Red Tail Hawk trail staging area, which is supposed to be located at the far end of Wilder Road, and also to complete one of the trails. According to City Attorney Fran Layton, who had been the lead attorney on the Wilder project for many years, OG LLC is now proposing to relocate the Red Tail Hawk staging area to the existing parking lot as well as proposing that the trail the developer is required to build be eliminated.

Much of the council discussion on Sept. 27 focused on the status of completion bonds and endowments. At the completion of the development, some elements are to be turned over to the Orinda Geological Hazard Abatement District or the East Bay Regional Parks District, with the California Department Fish & Wildlife also holding a \$5.8 million bond for which recent premiums have not been paid by the developer.

The question arose whether the non-payment of premiums would affect the ability of the bond-holders to draw down the funds from the bonds to fulfill the devel-

oper's obligations. City Manager David Biggs said that a number of Wilder issues had just been discussed by the GHAD, and that many of the GHAD improvements could be completed with the bonds. Bruce Yamamoto, speaking for the developer, suggested that the bonds had benefitted from compounding and market appreciation and that their value was well above the level of funding actually required to maintain Wilder.

Biggs explained that from the developer's perspective, there are resources that can be applied to a global solution. "We'll be looking at that next week. City staff and the city attorney are trying to engage with everyone. We want to see this done in a comprehensive way, not piecemeal, for all the people who have an interest in seeing Wilder completed," he said.

Olson said that he wanted to "assure everyone that we are looking at all the issues, and meeting with all the parties. We are not walking away, not trying to drag this out. It just takes a long time. Hopefully this will occur next week."

Council Member Nick Kosla analogized the relationship between the developer and the community: "It's always been a great marriage, and now you are initiating divorce proceedings."

Olson replied, "I don't have any experience in divorce, but I hear that some can be very amicable and that is what we hope for."



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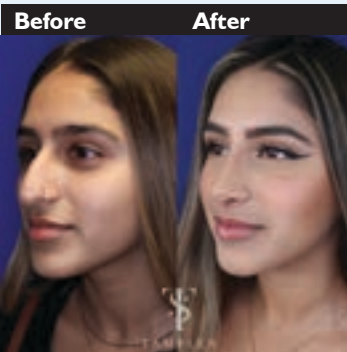
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