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Orinda gets winter storm damage update after county qualifies for FEMA assistance

By Sora O'Doherty



Damaged homes on Cedar Lane in Orinda Photo courtesy city of Orinda

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved Individual Assistance for residents of Contra Costa County for damages to private property that were incurred during the recent storms. In terms of damage to public property, the city of Orinda approved a resolution on Feb. 7 extending its declaration of emergency in order to allow it to forgo normal contracting procedures to speed up repairs to public facilities.

Scott Christie, Director of Public Works, told the Orinda City Council that the resolution is necessary to be exempt from bidding over \$60,000, and some of the damage Orinda has sustained could be over \$60,000. He noted that the landslide at Cedar Lane is an important situation. "So far the road appears to be in acceptable condition," he said. "In the worst case, the city might need to add a stabilizing retaining wall," adding, "and such a retaining wall could be quite expensive. We don't know what the future condition will be."

Also, he said that the damage on Tarry Lane, could exceed \$60,000 and might need to be addressed quickly. Without the emergency declaration, the bidding process could take up to 4 or 5 weeks. The emergency declaration is also necessary to qualify for potential funding from other agencies. Christie added that staff "did not include facilities like Orinda Oak Parks because we don't think the situation is so critical that it can't be handled under normal procedures."

The damage currently known about Orinda public property includes a sinkhole at the bike lane fronting 190 Moraga Way (interim repairs completed), shoulder/road edge failure near 57 Tarry Ln. (lane closure in effect and repair options being evaluated), a sinkhole/48-inch storm drain pipe failure in city easement at 7 North Ln. (repair options being evaluated) and a damaged 72-inch storm drain pipe under Miner Road south of Camino Don Miguel. Orinda City Hall and Community Center suffered water intrusion and the landslide at Cedar Lane, although primarily causing damage to two private homes, may also cause damage to the public road, although it hasn't yet.

It is estimated that to date, the cost for cleanup and repair activities for all of the public facilities is approximately \$160,000. This includes contractors, consultants and overtime for city staff. However, the total cost estimate for Orinda public properties, for complete repairs is roughly estimated to be \$ 1.5 million. The extent of funding through reimbursement programs (Office of Emergency Services or FEMA) is not known at this time. Furthermore, the timing of when complete repairs are necessary has not been determined, and would be affected by available funding sources.

Residents who have sustained property and business damage from the Dec. 31 2022 - Jan. 30 2023 series of winter storms can seek assistance directly from FEMA. Residents should apply online at www.disasterassistance.gov or by calling 1-800- 621-3362. It should be noted that applying does not guarantee that assistance will be awarded and FEMA assistance cannot aid with losses already covered by insurance. The disaster designation is: California Severe Winter Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides (DR-4683-CA).

Residents seeking disaster assistance must use either the website or phone number to start the application process. At this time, there is no local avenue for Individual Assistance applications. Residents must go through FEMA to apply for assistance. Once residents have registered, there will be information on the next steps and available programs. The website has many languages to choose from if English is not your primary language. There is also information available on the Quick Links portion of the website.

Apply for FEMA Assistance

http://www6.disasterassistance.org/?template=ARROW_3&tdfs=0&s_token=1675985291.0262440000&uid=1675985291.0262440000&term=Disaster%20Recovery%20Services&term=Personal%20Relief%20Loans&term=Application%20Management%20System&term=Applicant%20Tracking%20System&searchbox=0&showDomain=0&backfill=0

FEMA Q&A Flyer

https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema_help-after-disaster_english_trifold.pdf

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

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