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Chris Swim
Tracy Keaton
 DRE. 00943989 | 01051349
 925.766.1447
chris@chrisswim.com
chrisswim.com

COMPASS

Orinda mid-year budget adjustments are limited to two, budget remains balanced

By Sora O'Doherty

In one of two mid-cycle budget adjustments, Orinda found the funding to add one full-time-equivalent (FTE) position in Parks and Rec. The department, which is responsible for increased revenue during the six-month period of \$260,000,

had been one of the city areas hardest hit by the pandemic, with even the director of the department, Todd Trimble, laid off for a period, although he is now back to his full-time position. The new FTE position will be funded at \$126,225.

The other mid-cycle change was to allocate an ad-

ditional \$150,000 to the Public Works Department, primarily to deal with storm damage from this season's winter storms. Together, the proposed adjustments come to \$276,225. According to Administrative Services Director Doug Alessio, the budget will remain balanced, even with the proposed changes. Rev-

enues were up over the six-month period, with \$200,000 coming from taxes and another \$260,000 coming from Parks and Rec fees.

City staff are now working on the Biennial Budget for fiscal years 2023-24 and 2024-25, and it is anticipated that it will be adopted at the June 20 city council meeting.

Orinda City Council returns in person, hears about drainage problems, farmers' market disruption

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda City Council's March 7 meeting took place in the Orinda Library Auditorium for the first time in

about three years. Despite meetings having been held on the Zoom meeting platform, the return to in-person seemed surprisingly easy and familiar. For City Manager David Biggs, it was his first ever in-person Orinda council meeting, having been hired during the COVID pandemic. Council Member Brandyn Iverson had an excused absence, but the rest of the council was in attendance, along with the required staff. Masks were not worn in the sparsely populated auditorium. City Clerk Sheri Smith could be seen to be working on some technical difficulties, but nothing that interfered with the smooth flow of the meeting.

During the public forum, a number of neighbors showed up to complain about the lack of action on the storm drainage issue they say exists around the intersection of Sleepy Hollow and Ichabod Lanes in Orinda. Ian and Penny Baird provided the council with photographs and explained that they have been asking the city to deal with the issue since 2019 when Penny slipped on storm debris and broke her hip. The Bairds stated that some kind

of storm drain solution has been needed since they bought their home in 1976, and they have asked the council before in 2012, but thus far, nothing has been done beyond adding it to the list of capital improvement projects.

They were supported in their claims by neighbors Gareth Noyes and George Councilis, who explained that the curbed wheels of parked vehicles send fountains of water into nearby front yards. "If you put out your bins when it is raining," he said, "they'd be washed away."

On another topic, the council heard from developer Bahadour (Ben) Zarrin, who expressed concern that the renewal of the agreement with the Farmers' Market would jeopardize the redevelopment of 31 Orinda Way, the old Bank of America building. When the market is taking place on Saturday mornings, the most direct entrance to the building is not accessible. While it is possible to navigate to the building by entering the Rite Aid parking lot and driving around to the work site, Zarrin expressed concerns that this would present considerable

risks, especially when heavy construction vehicles require access. An additional concern he expressed was the willingness of restaurant tenants to commit to the building owing to the access situation. He suggested moving the street closure area somewhat to the south to allow the entrance to 31 Orinda Way to remain open during the Farmers' Market.

The council discussed the matter at some length, expressing support for the new development. Biggs pointed out that, although the agreement was proposed for three years, it could in fact be changed at any time. Council Member Janet Riley suggested that perhaps the number of vendors could be reduced or rearranged in order to keep the Village business-friendly. Mayor Inga Miller and Vice Mayor Darlene Gee thought that, at the time, there were more questions than answers. The council agreed to reduce the agreement period from three years to one, with the additional provision that the city manager could bring the matter back to the council if construction becomes an issue.

The annual Poul Anderson writing contest for Orinda high school students opens

By Sora O'Doherty

All students who reside and/or attend high school in Orinda may now submit entries for the Poul Anderson writing contest. The deadline

for submission is midnight, April 14. Students may submit one entry in any of the four categories for a total of not more than three entries. The categories are Science Fiction/Fantasy, Essay/Memoir/Biography, Poetry, and Short Story.

Entries will be judged by a panel of local judges who are involved professionally in reading, writing or publishing.

The contest is named in honor of the late Poul Anderson, a popular science-fiction writer and Orinda resident, who was a true friend to the

community for 40 years.

Up to four winners will each be awarded \$500 prizes at the end of the school year, underwritten by the Friends of the Orinda Library.

Awards will go to the works judged best. There will not necessarily be one award in each category. The winning entries will be posted on the Friends' website. Winning entries from previous years are also available to read on the website.

Entries must be submitted as PDFs or Word attachments to an email sent along with a contest entry form.

Further instructions for submission are on the 2023 Contest Entry Form, which can be found at <https://friendsoftheorindalibrary.org/2022/02/27/announcing-the-2021-poul-anderson-creative-writing-contest-2/>

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City Council Tri-Cities Meeting
 Wednesday, March 15, 7 p.m.
 St. Mary's College-Soda Center, Lafayette
 Conference Room, 1928 St. Mary's Road, Moraga

City Council Regular Meeting:
 Tuesday, March 21, 6:00 p.m.

Planning Comm.:
 Wednesday, March 28, 7:00 p.m.

Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission
 Wednesday, April 12, 6:30 p.m.