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Orinda senior housing project wins 'Best on the Boards' award

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda City Council on July 11 honored the Orinda Senior Housing Foundation in recognition of its receiving the Pacific Coast Conference 2023 Gold Nugget Award for the Vista Verde senior housing project. The Certificate of

Recognition proclaims that "this important project will provide sorely needed senior affordable housing." Former Orinda Mayor Victoria Smith accepted the award on behalf of the Orinda Senior Housing Foundation.

According to the Pacific Coast Conference, winners were chosen from a competitive field of 640 entries, that included some of the most creative and successful designers, planners and builders in the industry.

The Orinda project won the Best on the Boards award for projects that are planned but not yet built. Vista Verde was designed by DAHLIN Architecture/Planning/Interiors, with landscape design by Jett Landscape, and will be built by Oliver & Co., Inc.

The award may be viewed at <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/273831113/28-29/#zoom=true> (If you hover over the smaller, street level photograph there is a video presentation.)

Photo Sora O'Doherty

Victoria Smith and the Vista Verde team accept Certificate of Recognition from the Orinda City Council.



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Orinda names Wilder Field 2 in honor of Otis McCain

By Sora O'Doherty

Wilder Field 2 has officially been named by the Orinda City Council as Otis McCain Field. McCain, affectionately known as Odie, was a science teacher at Miramonte High School from 1962 to 2008, and earned the 1992 Warren Eukel

Award for his acclaimed teaching, coaching, and mentoring. He was also named the North Coast Cross Country Coach of the Year in 1995 and was inducted into the Miramonte Athletic Hall of Fame in 2019.

As an accomplished coach at Miramonte, particularly with the women's track and

cross country teams, Miramonte dominated the league from the mid-1970s to the 1990s. McCain coached many Orindans throughout the years including current and past members of the Orinda City Council.

In response to inquiries regarding how to honor him, former Council Member Nick

Kosla in November 2022 requested a matter initiated on the council agenda which led to the council deciding to name a Wilder Field in McCain's honor, in accordance with an 2012 policy allowing the naming or memorializing of city facilities, parks, open spaces and trails.

Orinda Planning Commission approves Chevron project

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This position was enthusiastically supported by The Friends of Orinda Creeks.

Another controversial issue has been the type of food to be offered at the Extra Mile convenience store. Planning staff had wanted to specify that the offerings contained

"fresh and nutritious" food, but Chevron agreed to "fresh food" as an alternative, and offered evidence of the types of foods available at nearby Extra Mile shop in Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill and Danville. Former Orinda mayor Laura Abrams opposed the project, both for reasons concerning the liability issue over the land dedication and the quality of the food that would be offered. In addition to written comments, Abrams appeared before the Commission and stated that she had not found the food offered in the Danville Extra Mile store to be fresh.

However, the public comments on the proposal were overwhelmingly positive. Speakers from The Friends of Orinda Creeks expressed their delight at the idea of making the creek more accessible to the public. The president of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, Roy Hodgkinson, spoke at the meeting in full support of the proposal, saying it would "provide benefits to the community, will bring in people, will help revitalize the downtown." Hodgkinson said that the design is nice, and he particularly welcomed the EV charging station, noting that his friends drive to Walnut Creek to charge their vehicles, and while there they dine with friends. Hodgkinson believes that the Chevron station and convenience store will bring increased sales tax revenues to Orinda. "Finally," he said, "we have the creek." Hodgkinson, who recently joined the board of the

Friends of Orinda Creeks concluded. "This is something that the community supports."

Bill Waterman, a board member of the Orinda Association, said that he was not speaking on behalf of the association, but noted that Chevron has supported Orinda events such as the car show and the Fourth of July parade. Waterman said that the Chevron service bays have been empty for over 20 years. "We have a ghost town," he proclaimed, and residents are frustrated because things aren't happening in Orinda. "The benefits far outweigh concerns about fresh food," he concluded. Jennifer Edmister, who described herself as a "recovering lawyer," said, "I'm not concerned about the quality of the food; I'm going to do my Thanksgiving shopping at the Farmers' Market." She lives close to the station and encouraged the commission to approve the proposal.

The liability issue was discussed at length. Planning Director Drummond Buckley explained the recommendation that the city refuse the transfer of ownership of the creek and trail property was based on staff's concerns about liability. "It's not just liability of the trail, it's liability of the creek itself, of the improvements that are in the creek," he said. "This particular parcel contains the outflow from where the creek goes underneath the freeway and the BART Station so there's a huge culvert that comes out right on this parcel, as well as concerns about lia-

bility from contaminants from the station itself leaking out onto the property. It's not just the trail issue; staff is concerned about the totality of the issues."

Commissioner Natalie Fay asked who has the liability for the creek now, and Buckley responded, Chevron. However, Commission Chair Willy Mautner opined that if Chevron dumped environmental contaminants, Chevron would be liable, and not the city. Public speakers also addressed the liability issue. Tom MacKinnon noted Orinda already owns a lot of land in the city and, in addition, he said that the city is already responsible for the channel itself. Brad McCullough agreed, asking, "Why shouldn't the city have liability for the public space?"

By a 5-1 vote, with Commissioner Ann Parnigoni voting no and Commissioner Lina Lee on an excused absence, the Commission adopted the proposal, eliminating the condition prohibiting transfer of ownership to the city, and agreeing to a simplified requirement that the convenience store have fresh food available. Any objectors to the Planning Commission action have 10 days to appeal to the city council.

The meeting, which was conducted in person and also on the Zoom meeting platform, was streamed to YouTube and may be viewed at www.youtube.com/live/6nqV_UDEPUQ?feature=share

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Host family sought for Czech visiting student

The Orinda Tabor Sister City Foundation is seeking a host family for the Czech visiting student this year. She will arrive in Orinda during the first week of August to attend Miramonte High School beginning on Aug. 15. Eliska will be one of over 20 students who have come from Tabor to Orinda. The Foundation can put you in contact with past host families, who can share their positive experiences hosting Czech students who lived in their homes for a semester. If interested, please contact Bobbie Landers at (925) 788-1279 or email bobbieanders@yahoo.com.



City Council Regular Meeting:
 Tuesday, Aug. 15, 7 p.m.
Planning Comm.:
 Tuesday, July 25, 7 p.m.

Traffic Safety Advisory Committee Regular Meeting
 Wednesday, Aug. 21, 7 p.m.
 Sarge Littlehale Community Room, 22 Orinda Way