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4.8% hike in refuse collection rates approved for Orinda

By Sora O'Doherty

Most Orinda residents will be paying an extra \$2.50 to \$2.85 a month in garbage rates, in accordance with a raise in collection rates approved by the City Council on Jan. 23. The increase allows Recycle Smart, a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to charge the higher rates from March 1 through Feb. 28, 2025. Orinda is represented on the JPA by council members Inga Miller and Janet Riley. With the increase, commercial monthly rates will go up by \$33.22 to \$49.83. Although the increases are described as monthly, services are actually billed quarterly.

Recycle Smart will be selecting a new trash hauler, but the process will take a couple of years. Riley said that during the process, the JPA wanted to avoid a price spike when the new hauler takes over, perhaps in 2027. Council Member Latika Malkani was reassured that the rate hike was consistent with what the JPA consultants had recommended, including a 3.3% rise in operating costs and a 1.37% rise in reserves.

Malkani also thanked Reilly and Miller for performing this time-consuming assignment.

Mayor Darlene Gee added her thanks to Miller and Riley, and said that the rate hike "seems quite reasonable. "Everything goes up at least a little every year," she added, and this increase "seems proportionately tolerable."

Malkani asked if complaints are down, and was assured that since the end of October, things have been a lot better because Republic Services brought in a national vice president to oversee local operations. There was no public comment on the rate increase.

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