



See public meetings schedule on these pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
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**The Orinda Association:**  
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**Orinda Public Meetings  
 City Council Regular Meeting:**

Tuesday, Feb. 20, 7 p.m.  
 Orinda Library Auditorium, 26 Orinda Way  
**Planning Commission**

Tuesday, Feb. 27, 7 p.m.  
 Orinda Library Auditorium, 26 Orinda Way

**Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission**  
 Wednesday, Feb. 14, 7:00 p.m.  
 Sarge Littlehale Community Room, 22 Orinda Way

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**Split city council agrees to look at private roads and drains in Orinda**

By Sora O'Doherty

With vigorous opposition by Council Member Inga Miller, the Orinda City Council voted 4-1 to form an ad hoc subcommittee to evaluate both private and public options for better integrating and maintaining community infrastructure, as proposed by Mayor Darlene Gee. As proposed and passed, the new subcommittee members will be Gee and Vice Mayor Latika Malkani, and the subcommittee will be a Brown Act body capable of receiving input from

the public. Without further action, the subcommittee will last only until December and will then sunset.

The council received almost five dozen written public comments on the proposed subcommittee, and two members of the public appeared in person to comment. Bob Finch suggested that the situation is like requiring every citizen to pay school taxes but not allowing 20% of residents to send their children to public school (20% of

Orinda's roads are estimated to be private). Joel Libove called the system of public and private infrastructure "grossly unfair."

Gee's vision includes not only private roads but also private drains. She expressed concern that having the maintenance of some of the city's drains in private hands puts the city at risk of massive damage, and also liability. She said, "If I could wave my magic wand, I'd like to be able to make it all one public system."

In her proposal, Gee stated, "I have always believed and voiced that a better integrated and maintained city infrastructure will need additional money beyond what is currently available." She added, "I also believe the community should have the information to thoroughly understand what the benefits and costs of a more integrated and better maintained system would be and the opportunity to vote on whether they support that."

Gee, prior to becoming a member of the council, served on the Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission, which oversaw the major renovation of public roads in Orinda. Miller said that the issue was "all new to her," and "really interesting." But as the discussion progressed, she made it clear that she strongly opposed the creation of the subcommittee.

There was some discussion about forming the subcommittee but returning to the matter

to define its scope, but Council Member Brandy Iverson believed that the scope could be defined, and included it in her motion to form the subcommittee. City Manager David Biggs confirmed Iverson's motion to approve the subcommittee with Gee and Malkani as members with the written scope attached to the agenda item, with the proviso that the subcommittee will refine the scope and bring that back to the council at a future date.

**Orinda not ready to move forward with sirens**

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda City Council members are very interested in following developments in siren systems designed to help protect residents from disasters, but are not yet ready to adopt such a system. After the devastation caused in Lahaina, Maui, by a wind-driven wildfire last year, questions arose about the use of sirens to warn residents. Lahaina has

sirens to warn of tsunami danger, but they were not used during the fire because officials feared that residents would flee in the wrong direction. In earlier California wildfires, some residents had no warning before the fire was upon them.

Berkeley, a city that

borders Orinda, also has sirens because it is located on the bay and could be subject to tsunamis. On Feb. 6, the Orinda City Council took a look at recent developments in the Berkeley siren system to see if they thought Orinda should adopt a similar system. Berkeley and

Orinda are similar in size, although Berkeley has a population of over 100,000 while Orinda's population is around 20,000. Orinda is hillier than Berkeley, and more wooded.

The new sirens in Berkeley have speakers, letting them warn for tsunamis, evacuations,

and shelter-in-place situations. Council members expressed concerns about the need for testing an emergency warning siren, and, for "smart" sirens, the ability of residents to make out the words. However, during their discussion, city council members considered that Orinda

residents are sophisticated and aware of impending conditions. In the event of a siren warning, the council believed that residents would then pursue further information before acting.

Information about the Berkeley siren system can be found at <https://berkeleyca.gov/your-government/our-work/capital-projects/outdoor-warning-system-emergency-siren-network>

**Garden Club recognized for Library Plaza refresh**

By Sora O'Doherty



For a project that has "restored a sense of tranquility and vibrancy in a space that fosters a connected community" the Orinda Garden Club was thanked by the City of Orinda at the Feb. 6 city council meeting. A certificate of recognition was presented to the club for "their purposeful vision and implementation of the renovation of the planter areas, and fountain area at Library Plaza" by Mayor Darlene Gee. Sue Anderson-Berger and Lisa Hallahan

accepted the certificate on behalf of the club.

The representatives of the garden club said that they would like to continue with the community center and the driveway to the library's underground parking lot, where they would like to remove masses of rosemary that hinders vision for motorists and is not fire safe.

The newly replanted areas include many native plants, that the garden club members said are pollinators and low

maintenance. Among the species listed are white crepe myrtle and Manzanita shrubs, pink carpet roses, Roxanne geraniums, celestial blue salvia, native verbena, popcorn ceanothus, Santa Barbara and seaside daisies, and many varieties of daffodil bulbs. 300 bulbs will provide color to the landscape over a long blooming season, as the club planted early, mid-season, and late blooming varieties.

Photo provided

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