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ORINDA

See public meetings schedule on these pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:
 www.cityoforinda.org
 Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce:
 www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:
 www.orindaassociation.org

City Council Regular Meeting:
 Tuesday, April 30, 7 p.m.
 Orinda Library Auditorium,
 26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission
 Tuesday, May 14, 7 p.m.
 Orinda Library Auditorium,
 26 Orinda Way

Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission
 Wednesday,
 May 8, 6:30 p.m.
 Sarge Littlehale Community
 Room, 22 Orinda Way

Resolution XX-24 establishing a parking variance In-Lieu fee holiday for AB 2097 projects fails

By Alison Burns

For decades, the overgrown lot at 25A Orinda Way has stood empty and neglected. But behind the boarded up windows, exciting plans have slowly been taking shape since June 14, 2022, when a new project was approved by Orinda's Planning Commission.

The Station, a state-of-the art 18,287 square foot mixed-use building, owned by the Ugenti and Colen families, promises to be a "destination for guests and residents year-round" which will create an "everyday ecosystem for local and regional residents".

Orinda badly needs a commercial project like The Station to breathe life into the city and promote downtown development. With its Miche-

lin star restaurateur, 3,000 sf. of fitness space, family friendly fire pits, and second story executive offices, the complex promises to lure visitors from miles around.

There is only one fly in the ointment: no parking.

Originally, there were to be 80 subterranean parking bays, six "parklets", and room for at least five bicycles, but all these appear to have disappeared.

No matter — when a Californian commercial building fails to offer a safe place to leave your vehicle, its developers have to pay "parking variance in-lieu" fees.

Under the rates stipulated in the current Master Fee Schedule, The Station owes \$823,810 in Parking In-Lieu Fees,

which the City could deposit into a dedicated parking fund and expend as needed, either to increase the supply or reduce the demand for public or private parking.

On Jan. 1, 2023, mere months after the developers had committed to the six-figure Parking In-Lieu Fees, Assembly Bill 2097 came into effect, exempting most projects from having to provide minimum on-site parking if they were located within one-half mile from a major transit stop. This would obviously apply to The Station, given its proximity to BART. Hypothetically, the developers could start over and submit their project for re-approval, it would doubtless involve other

costs and substantially delay construction.

Their hope was that at the April 16 City Council Meeting, approval would be granted for Resolution XX-24 Establishing a Parking Variance In-Lieu Fee Holiday for AB 2097 Projects, allowing the project to continue as planned, without having to pay the obligatory \$823,810.

The Resolution was hotly debated at the Council Meeting on April 16, involving three time extensions late into the night, until finally ending at 11 p.m.

The result came in at two ayes (Iverson and Riley) and three no's (Gee, Miller and Malkani).

The motion was not carried.

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Surrounded by just a fraction of the volunteers who regularly help out at the Orinda Baseball Association (OBA), Bob Hegarty is pictured on April 16 receiving a proclamation from Mayor Darlene Gee in honor of the OBA's 40th anniversary. With over 350 Orinda children participating in the Spring and Fall leagues each year, it is estimated that more than 10,000 young players have participated in the OBA program since 1984. In recognition of the generations of Orindans whose lives have been enriched by what Hegarty started in the eighties, the baseball field at Del Ray Elementary school will henceforth be known as Bob Hegarty Field. - A.Burns



Photo Alison Burns

Subcommittee tackles infrastructure and drainage problems for private roads

By Alison Burns

It was standing room only in the Sarge Littlehale Community Room on April 17 when Mayor Darlene Gee and Vice Mayor Latika Malkani headed the first meeting of a newly-formed ad-hoc Infrastructure Subcommittee. The plan was to evaluate the various options available for integrating and maintaining the community infrastructure and drainage on Orinda's many private roads.

Gee — who is a Civil Engineer by profession — opened the meeting by admitting that the current situation comprises "a long series of problems that are not easy to solve", but added that she is "a strong believer that just because it's not easy [doesn't mean] we shouldn't be working on it".

She said that in the past, the City had spent "quite a bit of time talking about private roads, but we've never really spent so much time talking about private drainage, which is every bit of challenge for you and your neighbors".

In a space of just four weeks, prior to the meeting, the City had received over 60 letters of complaint, all echoing the same theme: that Orinda residents living on private streets, who already contribute regular taxes, should not have to pay additional tens of thousands of dollars to maintain their road surfaces and drains.

Many of the complaints were directed at services like Central San and EBMUD, who enjoy easements on private roads, and "will dig up and ruin our road as they see fit", according to Rachel Burge, yet do not contribute to the cost of the damage they cause.

According to former Mayor Dennis Fay (a retired transportation engineer), the average home generates five car trips a day. By contrast, one heavy garbage/recycle truck has the same effect as 9,000 car trips, which means that three trucks making their weekly run will impact streets with the equivalent of 27,000 car trips

Steve Cohn, who has long been very vocal about this inequality, spoke for a group known as Orindans for Fair Road Funding. Their website questions why 20% of Orinda's homeowners and taxpayers are unable to access the same services as their neighbors on public roads.

The gulf between private and public streets began in the mid-1920s, when tracts of land were subdivided and developed into residential lots. Over time, some streets were established as "public", but even when Orinda became incorporated in 1985, almost one third of its 85 miles of residential streets were still regarded as private.

Gradually, a two-class road system

evolved: providing publicly funded access to 5,500 of Orinda's residents right up to their driveways, while denying that same benefit to the remaining 1,500 homeowners. The phrase "second class citizens" was heard throughout the meeting.

When Gee asked how many newcomers actually realized they were buying a house on a private road, a large number of hands shot up into the air, to the surprise of onlookers.

It turns out that realtors are not obligated to disclose that their clients are about to sink their savings into underwriting the cost of repairing a road that might well throw up long-established drainage issues or even sinkholes, potholes, and landslides.

At the end of what Gee called the evening's "robust conversation", both Councilors said they had listened to everyone in the room and were wholly committed to finding a solution to what had long been "a very problematic issue".

At present, the subcommittee is expected to be in existence until December 2024, but this can be extended until a work plan and proposal have been submitted to the City Council.

An audio recording of the meeting is available at orinda.igmp2.com

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