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Photo Baldwin Lee

From left, Campolindo Coach Phil Freeman, Madison Lee, Hannah Ripper and Miramonte Coach Louis Suba smile after the girls qualify for the state tournament.

Lamorinda wrestlers compete at NCS; Ripper and Lee make it to state

By Jon Kingdon

There were 13 boys from Lamorinda (Acalanes-8, Campolindo-5) who qualified Feb. 18 and 19 for the North Coast Sectional tournament at James Logan High School. At the same time, there were 13 Lamorinda girls (Acalanes-3, Campolindo-9 and Miramonte-1) who arrived at Albany High School with the same goal: make it to state. For the girls, it was a matter of finishing among the top four wrestlers in their weight class.

In the end, there were just two wrestlers from Lamorinda still standing, qualifying for the state tournament: Miramonte's Hannah Ripper (132) who finished in first overall, pinning her final opponent in 50 seconds and Campolindo's Madison Lee (138) who finished in fourth. At that point, their coaches and parents quickly grabbed their phones to make room reservations in Bakersfield.

Though not the first wrestlers from Lamorinda to have advanced on to the state tournament, Ripper and Lee are the first females to take that next step. Ripper can technically claim to be the first, having

qualified 20 minutes ahead of Lee.

After winning her first three matches by pins at the state tournament, Ripper lost her next two matches to the eventual winner and No. 1 seed and then pinned her final opponent to finish in fifth place. "Hannah had an incredibly strong finish," Miramonte head coach Louis Suba said. "She's an unbelievable competitor and it was a great tournament for her."

As the first female from Lamorinda to place at the state meet, Ripper is also the first wrestler from Miramonte to place since Mike MacDonald's third place finish in 1999.

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Orinda digs into planning for next housing element cycle

By Sora O'Doherty

With a much higher number of housing units to provide for in the next cycle of the Housing Element than the last, Orinda's city council gave serious consideration to a staff update on Feb. 15. In addition to the staff report, the council received a presentation by its consultant, Placeworks.

Planning Director Drummond Buckley told the council to expect the draft Housing Element at the end of March. Buckley also had a presentation about potential sites outside the downtown area and on the subject of density bonuses.

Orinda has been assigned 1,359 Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) units for the 6th cycle Housing Element, up by 1,132 from the current housing cycle requirement of 227 units.

Orinda exceeded its RHNA number for the fifth cycle, with 291 total building permits having been issued. The Housing Element, which will be in effect for eight years, must be adopted before January 31, 2023. Staff recommends adding an additional 25% buffer, bringing the total number up to 1,506, which would include 734 units of very low to low-income housing, 215 units of moderate housing, and 557 units of above moderate housing.

The Housing Element, which is required by state law for all cities, towns and counties in California, does not require government to build housing, but to provide for the

possibility of housing with planning and zoning. Jennifer Gastalum of Placeworks explained that the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has really been ramping up enforcement beginning in southern California. She also explained that the effects of new laws on the Housing Element is not yet known, partially because promised guidance from HCD is not yet available. These new laws include SB 8, the Housing Crisis Act Extension, and SB 9, under which up to two primary units will be allowed by right on all single-family-zoned lots. Although this could potentially double the number of potential new housing units, the city cannot rely on SB 9 units until the HCD guid-

ance becomes available.

Orinda has existing residentially zoned sites that can be counted in the sites inventory without any rezoning, including 64 units at Santa Maria Church and 583 currently vacant residentially-zoned sites. In addition, the planned Vista Verde Senior Housing project of 52 units is pending approval and the approved Wilder CountryHouse Memory Care project would provide another 38 units. That project recently withstood a court challenge, (see story Feb. 16) but may be subject to further litigation prior to breaking ground.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are estimated based on previous building permit history. This allows the city to add a total of 64 ADU units to

their count, which still leaves a shortfall of 707 housing units that need to be found in the city and rezoned.

In November 2021, staff presented a number of potential sites to the council that can be rezoned in order to meet the RHNA, and made an online tool available to the public to allow them to offer their views on apportioning the remaining RHNA among the potential sites. These sites include the area covered by the upcoming downtown precise plan, including the downtown commercial and office zoned districts. There are four churches in Orinda that have large-surface parking lots, as well as the eastern and western parking lots for BART.

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