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## Orinda Council Supports 55% Threshold for Local Tax Measures

By Andrea A. Firth

The biggest financial challenge facing Orinda is how to fund the City's \$120 million in infrastructure needs-this is no secret. Residents regularly dodge potholes and for two years running Orinda's roads have had the distinction of being named the worst in the Bay Area. Twice the City has placed infrastructure bonds before the voters and failed to obtain the required 2/3 approval by a narrow margin. City Council, staff, and Task Force volunteers continue to strategize ways to obtain grants and additional revenue sources to address the infrastructure needs, and the problem persists. Most recently the Council worked the legislative angle.

At the February 17th City Council meeting, the Council adopted a resolution in support of a bill authored by California State Assembly Member Jared Huffman that would amend the State Constitution and lower the voter threshold to 55% for special local taxes. Currently, local taxes require a 2/3 voter approval-a bar that is often difficult to reach. [Local taxes used to finance school facility improvements are an exception and require a 55% voter approval-a change approved through Proposition 39 in 2000.]

According to the Mayor Sue Severson, the Contra Costa Mayors Conference has begun to expand its advocacy efforts. Civic leaders across the County have been encouraged to take a more active role in support of legislation that will enable cities to retain greater local control for priorities that they have established. To that end the Council considered and adopted the resolution in support of lowering the voter threshold, however the Council's action will not amend the 2/3 requirement-that will require approval by the State legislature and a statewide vote.

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