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Council considers new capital projects

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda City Council members loved the new format staff chose to present them with the Draft Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Years 2019-23. The new format is streamlined to include four lists of potential projects, as well as one to list last year's approved projects. The lists include projects that staff recommends as new capital improvement projects, another list contains projects that staff recommends, but for which there is inadequate funding; while another list contains the projects that staff recommended be added to the unfunded project list. The final list is other potential capital improvement projects.

The council was impressed with the ease with which they could review the projects. However, one or two projects alarmed one council member or another. Vice Mayor Darlene Gee wondered about a 60-inch culvert in poor condition at Great Oaks Circle and Orchard Road. The replacement and upgrade of the culvert to a 100-year storm capacity is estimated at a cost of \$1 million. Gee said that the idea of a very large culvert in poor condition scared her. City Manager Steve Salomon noted that the replacement of the culvert is in the storm drain master plan, but not the increase in capacity. Council Member Dennis Fay spoke about expanding the trimming and removal of trees on city-owned property. This emergency preparedness item is included in the strategic plan. Staff recommends bumping up the effort by increasing funding from \$20,000 to \$50,000.

Council Member Amy Worth asked about designing and constructing two to four bocce ball courts in Orinda. Apparently, bocce enthusiasts have offered funding, but the problem appears to be finding a suitable location for the courts. Fay and Miller expressed interest in accelerating the upgrade of all existing curb ramps and Fay said he was concerned about the item that deals with stabilizing city hall in the face of "large transverse cracks in the parking spaces." While the building itself is not in danger, being constructed on a deep pile foundation, the upper parking lot, sidewalk, and the enclosures for mechanical equipment are being affected. The work is estimated at somewhat over a half million dollars.

Ian and Penny Baird waited through the long meeting to talk to the council about item A7 concerning the Icabod Lane storm drain extension. Penny Baird appealed to the council to undertake the work for safety reasons. She slipped in the wet conditions and broke her leg. Four to five months of the year there is a heavy flow of water down Icabod Lane, according to the Bairds, in addition to mud, branches and rocks. Ian Baird said that sometimes the water is more than an inch deep at the crown of the road, so obviously much deeper over the rest of the road. The cost is estimated at \$50,000 and staff recommended that the project be added to the list of Capital Improvement Projects as a funded project for construction in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Other projects ranged from modest, such as the Vashell Way pedestrian activation and the library terrace area pedestrian improvements, each estimated to cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000, to projects expected to cost over a million dollars, such as repairing the slide on the north side of Happy Valley Road or widening El Toyonal to accommodate a school bus. The complete list of projects is available online as part of the agenda packet for the April 23 city council meeting.

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