

# Civic News Orinda

## Public Meetings

**City Council** Tuesday, January 4, 7:00 pm  
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

**Planning Commission** Tuesday, January 11, 7:00 pm  
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
City of Orinda: [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org)  
Chamber of Commerce: [www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org)

### Police Report



of alcohol intoxication. Turns out she was driving under a suspended license and was on probation for another D.U.I. incident.

**High on more than life, 12/15/10**  
A car was stopped after midnight at the Orinda exit off of Highway 24 for expired registration tags. The officer on duty noticed that the driver displayed signs of being under a "central nervous system stimulant." A phlebotomist was called in at the late hour to draw blood. Mr. Giddy was taken to the detention facility in Martinez.

**Mystery man robber, 12/15/10**  
The manager on duty spied an unknown man in the back office of the True Value Hardware store. While he called the cops, the mystery man disappeared along with \$474.00 in a bank bag. No one saw his stealthy get away.

**Vandalism, 12/11/10** Sometime during the night an unknown suspect smashed the front window of a car parked in a Muth Drive driveway. Nothing was taken from the car – but there was \$150 in damage. Can't win – even with nothing in sight. Short of wrapping your car in plastic or barbed wire, what's a car owner supposed to do?

**Accident + D.U.I., 12/15/10**  
A busy Wednesday night for the cops – a middle aged female was involved in a collision on El Camino Moraga and fled the scene. Police found her in her car parked in her driveway with a bottle of wine in her hand. Oddly enough, she displayed symptoms



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## Orinda's Council Gets a New Member and a New Mayor

By Andrea A. Firth



Council Member Victoria Smith presented outgoing Mayor Tom McCormick with his gavel.

Photo Ohlen Alexander

At the December 7th City Council meeting, outgoing Council member and former Mayor Tom McCormick was recognized for his service on the Council over the past four years. As Council

Members Victoria Smith, Amy Worth, Sue Severson, and Steve Glazer gently teased McCormick about his adroit use of the Mayor's gavel, they also commended his hard work on programs for the

youth of the City and the streamlining of the planning process. McCormick said he truly enjoyed his time on the Council and that he was looking forward to having more time to spend with his four children.

The meeting quickly moved on to the installation of three new Council members: incumbents Amy Worth and Sue Severson, who placed first and second in votes counted in the November election, and new Council member Dean Orr. Orr had been the Chair of the Planning Commission; Louise Adamson will step into that role. The new Council then elected Victoria Smith to serve as Mayor, her second time in this post, and Steve Glazer as Vice Mayor.

Mayor Smith's outlook for the upcoming year in Orinda was confident yet sobering. Smith noted that the ongoing recession and the flat-lining of the City's tax revenues would continue to present financial challenges in the next year. As far as repairing Orinda's crumbling roads, with the limited funds available Smith acknowledged, "We have not been able to [fully] address this." Regarding the downtown development process, she stated that the Council was committed to continuing a two-way dialogue with the citizenry. And in closing, Smith invoked the lyrics of the song *I've Got to Use My Imagination*, by Gladys Knight & the Pips, and stated, "We gotta keep on keeping on."

## Downtown Visioning—Round 2

By Andrea A. Firth

About 80 residents recently attended the second downtown development workshop sponsored by the City and aimed at getting community input to create a vision for the future of Orinda's commercial districts. Although not quite the size crowd that gathered for the first workshop held in October, a similar debate over if, what,

and how to change Orinda's downtown ensued.

Some residents challenged the need and viability of the downtown "revitalization" concept. "Orinda is a place where I live. It's a bedroom community. Retail is less important, I'm not really sure that I want [downtown] to be vital," said one woman. Another added, "Retail

and semi-rural is an oxymoron."

Yet others lamented that Orinda's commercial districts are tired and provide limited retail, restaurant, and service options. "Celebrated, well-used, vital retail may be a possibility for Orinda. Don't avoid this because you fear something awful could happen," stated one gentleman.

The something awful for one faction of the audience was the idea of raising the building height from the current 35-foot limit to 55-feet as proposed by the City task force that drafted recommendations for the downtown planning process. A supporter of the building height status quo called for any increase in height to be placed before the voters in a city-wide referendum. But others found the argument against increased building height, specifically 55 feet, arbitrary and unclear. They identified the need for more information and visual aids to show what a 55-foot tall building looks like in various parts of the City.

It's unlikely that any change will come soon. "We are in the first stage of gathering input, and we will continue these workshops to collect input from all sectors of the community," said Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu as he outlined the process, which could take as long as two years. "We will use the community's vision to update the City's General Plan," added Ursu. "The General Plan is a long-term document, but it needs to evolve as the residents' views change over time," he stated, noting that the last comprehensive update to the plan was done in 1987.

Based on the input from both workshops, one point of consensus among residents is the desire for a vibrant, sustainable retail environment in the downtown districts according to workshop facilitator, Chris Beynon of MIG in Berkeley. However, opinions diverged as to whether this is best achieved through new development or by supporting existing businesses, and residents were also divided on the type of retail they want.

How to overcome the BART/freeway barrier between The Crossroads and Orinda Village to create a more connected downtown also sparked a lot of discussion.

"There is no plan," said Beynon in closing. "What you are doing here is building the plan."

## Orinda Motors Recognized for Philanthropy



Photo Ohlen Alexander

The owners of Orinda Motors, Allen and Terry Pennebaker, were recently recognized for their many philanthropic contributions to the City. In addition to the major support Orinda Motors provides to the annual car show each September, it also supports a number of other community events and causes and hosts a plethora of carwash fundraisers

annually. Allen, who purchased the business with his wife in 1996, also recognized his longtime Service Manager John Vanek, who has been integral to making Orinda Motors' strong community connection happen. Pictured (from L to R) Terry Pennebaker, Allen Pennebaker, and Council Member Amy Worth.

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