

Civic News Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council Tuesday, March 1, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission Tuesday, February 22, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC)
Monday, February 28, 7:00 pm
Community Room, City Hall, 22 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Orinda: www.cityoforinda.org
Chamber of Commerce: www.orindachamber.org

• Police Report •




Shopping spree thwarted, 1/28/11 After running a stop sign at Camino Pablo and El Toyonal, police pulled the driver over and found in the center console and on the passenger seat multiple gift cards to various stores along with a credit card. The credit card belonged to a senior housing facility.

Car burglary, 1/27/11 Although the 2003 Audi was only parked on Davis Road for 15 minutes, an efficient thief shattered the driver's side window and took a leather wallet that had been on the passenger seat in plain view. Estimated loss of the wallet \$10, estimated repair cost for broken window – way more than \$10. Hmm – maybe cheaper to have not left the wallet out.

Warrant arrest, 1/27/11 A 46-year-old man was arrested on a \$240,000 warrant on Camino Encinas for conspiring to commit a crime and for the transportation and sale of drugs. No other information available.

Yet another warrant arrest, 1/21/11 This time on Brookwood Road, \$50,000 for selling cocaine and another undisclosed controlled substance. Nothing else to report in the police blotter – maybe that's a good thing.

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NOP of the Draft EIR for the Astoria at Wilder Project

Notice of Preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report Scoping Meeting for the Astoria project will be held on Wednesday, February 23 at 6 PM in the City of Orinda Community Center, Room 10, 28 Orinda Way.

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Residents and Developer Discuss Future of Moraga Adobe

By Andrea A. Firth



The Moraga Adobe (left), boasts a spectacular view of Mt. Diablo

Photo Andy Scheck

The Orinda Planning Commission recently received an informational update from Planning Department staff and developer Michael Olson regarding a proposed 13-lot, residential subdivision located at 24 Adobe Lane. The property is the site of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe—an official Orinda landmark that is listed on the National Register of Historical Places. At its February 8th meeting, the Commission also heard from several residents who advocated for careful deliberation regarding preservation of the adobe and surrounding land.

“The adobe is Orinda’s treasure. It deserves great and careful consideration not only for the building but for the site itself,” said Bobbie Landers, Vice Chair of the city’s Historical Landmarks Committee (HLC).

Longtime Orinda resident Kent Long, who is President of the community group Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe, concurred, “This project will present some of the most important deci-

sions [the Planning Commission] will make... This truly presents a one time opportunity to secure a historic resource for the community and the area as a whole.”

The adobe sits on a knoll at the center of the 20-acre property that was once part of a 13,000-acre land grant to famous area settler Joaquin Moraga and his cousin Juan Bernal. Constructed in 1841, the Joaquin Moraga Adobe is the oldest of the five remaining adobes in Contra Costa County. The property has always been privately owned, and the adobe’s original three-room structure has been altered several times over the years.

Olson and his partners John French and Peter Branagh purchased the property in October of 2008. Olson, city staff, the HLC, and the Friends of the Adobe have met several times to discuss design, use, and ownership options for the adobe. Landers and Long both acknowledged the developer’s cooperation in the process, however no formal agreement has been reached between the parties.

One of the primary concerns of the citizen interest groups is the amount of undeveloped land that will surround the adobe. As currently proposed, the adobe will sit on a one-acre parcel and serve as a clubhouse for the subdivision residents. Broader community access to or ownership of the adobe would be subject to approval by the future home owners’ association.

Orinda’s neighbors from Moraga were also on hand to express their support for the preservation of adobe site. “There should be sufficient free space around the adobe to protect view corridors, provide room for visiting groups to assemble, and allow gardening,” said Ron Louis, President of the Moraga Historical Society. Louis explained that former owners of the adobe, Donald and Jean Manuel, explored remodeling the structure in the 1960’s and were told by the County that the adobe site should be surrounded by a minimum of five acres of undeveloped space.

Even five acres was not a sufficient buffer from development for some adobe preservation advocates. Lance Beeson, a descendant of Joaquin Moraga, told the Commission that surrounding the adobe with a new development of homes would destroy the context of what was once a sprawling ranch, and he advocated that the property be developed solely as a historic

site. “It is time for this adobe to go back to the public... it existed before the town of Moraga and the city of Orinda,” said Beeson.

“This is not just an issue for Orinda, it’s an issue for Moraga as well,” said Dave Trotter, a Council member in Moraga and former President of the town’s Historical Society. Trotter encouraged the Planning Commission to design the adobe project with the east view in mind, eliminate rooftops that might obscure views of Mt. Diablo, and secure adequate outdoor space for public gardens. “You only have one chance to get this right. This might be the most important decision the five of you make in your time here,” said Trotter.

What’s next? Orinda’s Historical Landmarks Committee will review the developers’ pre-design report regarding the rehabilitation and development of the adobe at its next meeting on February 22nd at 3:00 p.m. in the Gallery Room of the Orinda Library. Orinda’s Planning Department expects to have a complete initial study and mitigated negative impact report for the adobe property available for public review in about a month and a public hearing on the project will be subsequently scheduled.

Council Says “No” to Medical Marijuana Dispensaries

By Cathy Dausman

The Orinda City Council moved to ban Medical Marijuana Dispensaries (MMD) within the city, directing staff to draft an ordinance to implement the decision. The discussion regarding policy options at its February 1st regular meeting was short, and the vote

unanimous, with all council members taking part. Mayor Smith extended her sympathies “to people suffering from cancer or another illness that medical marijuana relieves, who have to travel a distance to obtain that medication.”

A temporary moratorium

on establishing MMDs in Orinda took effect July 7, 2009 and will expire July 6, 2011. The proposed new ordinance, which is expected to be approved at an upcoming council meeting, will make the ban permanent.