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Published March 28th, 2012

Signs of the Times

Political and other temporary signs coming to an intersection near you

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Following analysis and debate at three separate Orinda City Council meetings in January and February 2012, Orinda City Council members and staff finally approved - at the fourth meeting, held on March 20 - new Regulations for Temporary Signs. Council members hope that these new regulations will demonstrate the City's support for freedom of speech and ensure an encouraging climate for area businesses while still enabling the City to have enough regulatory authority to head off urban blight from the proliferation of political and other portable signs.

Through it all, Council members and staff weighed the desires and potential legal requirements of interested parties as diverse as Orinda's individual merchants and Chamber of Commerce, the fire department, the Contra Costa Association of Realtors, the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Northern California (ACLU), area candidates for political office, and Orinda residents and homeowners' associations who were expressing opinions for or against increasing displays around the City of signs to advertise everything from candidates to sandwich specials to homes for sale.

Details regarding the sizes, types, and number of signs that may be placed in the public right-of-way, versus on private property, and for how long those signs may remain are provided in a brochure available from the City's Planning Department. That brochure also explains what actions will not be permitted when displaying temporary signs moving forward including, but not limited to, signs that are illuminated or have rotating or moving parts, or are placed in areas that would cause safety problems.

Additionally, City Council adopted Resolution No. 01-12, which designates the following 14 locations near major intersections as being appropriate for the display of temporary portable signs in the public right-of-way:

1. Camino Pablo and Miner Road
2. Camino Pablo and El Toyonal
3. Camino Pablo and El Sobrante
4. Honey Hill Road and Via Las Cruces
5. Saint Stephens and El Nido Ranch
6. Moraga Way and Overhill Road
7. Moraga Way and Glorietta Boulevard
8. Moraga Way and Valley View Drive
9. Moraga Way and Hall Drive
10. Moraga Way and Ivy Drive (North)
11. Saint Stephens and Hidden Valley Road
12. Overhill Road and Tara Road
13. Glorietta Blvd and Rheem Blvd
14. Charles Hill Road and El Nido Ranch Road

According to the staff report prepared for this meeting, the City will expend approximately \$1,000 for Public Works staff to install "small reference markers [at each intersection] to help the public identify the designated areas in the public right-of-way for display of temporary portable signs."

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