



# Orinda Civic News

## Public Meetings

### City Council

Community Room, City Hall  
Tuesday, Oct. 1, 7 p.m.  
Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

### Planning Commission

Tuesday, Oct. 8, 7 p.m.  
Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

### Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Oct. 9, 6:30 p.m.  
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,  
22 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

### City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org  
Phone (925) 253-4200

### Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

### The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org

### School Board Meeting

#### Orinda Union School District

Monday, Oct. 7, 6 p.m.  
OUSD Office, Vintage Building  
25 Orinda Way, Suite 200  
www.orindaschools.org  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2



**Orinda Police**  
Department crime statistics for the month of September will appear in our Oct. 9 issue.

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## Orinda's Housing Element Continues to Evolve

By Laurie Snyder

*"... our most successful leaders have succeeded because of their devotion to the public good.... Our unique democracy—still an historical experiment—will "long endure," prosper and provide leadership only in direct proportion to the participation of all our citizens. It is that important."* — Excerpt from "An Open Letter to American Citizens on Constitution Day," September 17, 2013 — Sandra Day O'Connor, Associate Justice (Ret.), and John Glenn, United States Senator (Ret.)

It seemed fitting, at the close of Constitution Day—the annual day on which America's children focus their attention on our nation's greatest, guiding document—that the Orinda City Council was in session Sept. 17 and hearing from area citizens concerned about a diverse range of subjects—safety at Bay Area BART stations, exciting plans for this year's community restaurant tour, and one resident's surprising encounter in Orinda with an assault weapon similar to the one used in the Washington Naval Yard shooting.

During the main event of the

evening, debate continued regarding the city's development of a legally required housing element. Once again, the public comment period drew nearly 20 speakers. This time, however, the tenor of the dialogue was far more civil with council members, staff and residents thanking each other for the hours devoted to reviewing and commenting on the document—text that remains in draft form despite the fact that Orinda is the only city in Contra Costa County which has not yet adopted a housing element. Failure to approve and secure state certification of this document before the end of January could derail the city's receipt of critically needed planning and transportation funds, including a potential \$553,000 grant currently being sought to fund road improvements for the Ivy Drive neighborhood.

During the City Council's most recent confab—the sixth in a series of public meetings since 2009, two possible versions of a draft housing element were presented. One was an update to the draft released by the city in June, and included adjustments following input by council members and

the public at an Aug. 20 meeting.

The other, which has been termed "the Citizens' Edit" by its creators, was presented by members of Orinda Watch (www.orindawatch.org), which has been receiving guidance from Bay Area Citizens (bayareacitizens.com), the organization being represented by the Sacramento-based Pacific Legal Foundation (www.pacificlegal.org) as it challenges Plan Bay Area.

Both drafts of the housing element are far too lengthy to summarize effectively in the short space available for this article. Readers are urged to visit the city's website to hear the meeting's audio and view both draft versions of the element and related documents.

Terming Orinda Watch's edits "very substantive," Councilmember Dean Orr pointed to entire sections of the June document that were removed when that group's members demanded that the city's housing element be advocacy neutral and only contain items that were absolutely necessary for the city to receive HCD certification.

Cautioning that there were some components to the Orinda Watch draft "which may represent the views of some citizens of Orinda but not others," Councilmember Victoria Smith suggested that further analysis by the City Council and staff be undertaken to assess which of the most recent citizen recommendations should be incorporated.

Vice mayor Sue Severson observed that the needs of seniors hoping to downsize to smaller, market rate homes rather than the affordable housing options offered for lower income residents had not yet been factored into the draft element, and should be included by staff for council members' next review.

Mayor Amy Worth concurred, stating that the document should reflect how housing is impacted as Orinda residents "evolve from a market rate income to a retirement income."

Staff will incorporate the City Council's latest directives, and will bring another revised draft element back for additional public review sometime in October.

## Orinda Okays Major Study of Storm Drainage System

By Laurie Snyder



A repair crew is now working its way down to fix a failed drainage system in the Tarabrook neighborhood, which spawned a massive sinkhole last December. A new, sturdier 36-inch concrete drainage pipe will be lowered into this jacking and boring pit—a challenging 25 feet below ground—before workers tunnel and inch the pipe to its final destination. Photo Chuck Swanson

The Orinda City Council assessed, once again, Orinda's aging drainage system as it considered whether or not to award an engineering services contract to conduct a Master Storm Drainage Study at its

Sept. 17 meeting.

"The extent and locations of deficiencies within the City's storm drain system are unknown as recently made evident with the culvert failure at Tarabrook Drive during a major rain event last December 2012," according to city staff. The last time city leaders had truly fresh data was in 1994 when Camp, Dresser and McKee Inc. (now CDM Smith) prepared a storm drainage master plan.

The goal this time "is to develop a comprehensive plan for the entire city that addresses the condition of the existing storm drainage system, identifies and analyzes structural and capacity deficiencies in the City-owned storm drains, provides recommendations for future improvements, and establishes criteria for prioritizing projects," according to the staff report. The study's findings, if eventually adopted by the City Council, would be used to prioritize future improvements under Orinda's Capital Improvement Plan.

Staff interviewed representatives from two of five companies submitting bids, and recommended that the city award the contract to the highest bidder, Schaaf & Wheeler (\$249,180), because Schaaf personnel are qualified to prepare the specific

type of study needed and demonstrated that they clearly understood the city's objectives. CDM Smith, a former contractor for the city and the lowest bidder on this project (\$182,100), was not selected because "their proposal continued to focus more on the hydrology and hydraulics of the overall storm drain system, as previously detailed in their 1994 report, than a condition assessment of existing pipes."

Schaaf, a civil engineering firm with experience in flood control and drainage, has created storm drain master plans for Alameda, Santa Cruz, Livermore, and Los Altos. "Much of the Orinda system is made up of hillside ditch-culvert systems," reads the proposal. "These are in various conditions ranging from good to highly corroded. A critical component of this study will be to determine how these systems function and prioritize elements that are in critical need of repair or replacement." The company's full proposal is available on the city's website, along with the staff report.

The amount of the Schaaf contract falls within the city's current CIP budget which, when approved by council this past June, projected the need to expend up to \$250,000 for a master storm drainage study.

"It seems to me that we don't even know where all of the storm drains are," observed Councilmember Victoria Smith, who asked if the study would also help the city zero in on areas most in need of repair. Councilmember Dean Orr then asked if staff would be creating a work plan linked to the study results.

Public works director Chuck Swanson indicated that the study would certainly help city staff better prioritize and that a work plan would be developed, but also cautioned that the present degree of deterioration may be so extensive system-wide that it will take the city time to get to everything on its lengthy honey-do list.

After deliberating, council members approved the contract on 5-0 vote, and directed staff to share results of the study with members of the Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission to ensure that the planning of city drain and road repair efforts is undertaken holistically.

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