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Letters to the Editor

Orinda council should vote "no" on Wilder Amendment

The Orinda City Council should reject the proposed Eighth Amendment to the Wilder Development Agreement. An important issue is being overlooked.

The issue that is being overlooked is that the City and the Developer have a binding contract that the Developer wants to change so it can make more money, while offering the City little or nothing in return. It is the duty of the Council to represent and defend the interests of the City and its residents. The Developer is not a charitable organization but rather a for-profit business. The Developer wants concessions so that it can make more money. It is the job of the Council to obtain a quid pro quo that has value substantially equivalent to the value that the Developer desires. Yet I see no mention of this in the discussion. The City Staff is equally culpable. The Staff, like the Council, has a duty to represent and protect the residents of Orinda. Yet a member of the Staff told me that it is not the City Staff's duty to obtain a quid pro quo. I respectfully disagree.

I also respectfully disagree with Councilmember Gee, who reportedly stated that "she could see how residents might feel that things had been misrepresented, but that was between the homeowners and the developer." The Council should not take action favorable to a Developer that might lead residents to feel that things had been misrepresented by the Developer, especially considering that the City is getting little or no value in return.

It is very disappointing that, with the exception of Mayor Worth, we cannot count on our elected Council, to represent and defend our interests.

Nick Waranoff
Orinda

Moraga Storm Drain Fee

We've all seen the signs around town, now here are the facts:

Each of our property owners in Town are being asked to vote on a fee based on their fair share of storm water that they contribute to the Town's storm drain system. This fee (if passed) will be paid as follows:

- 75% percent will be paid for by single family homeowners,
- 5% by schools,
- and the remainder by commercial, multi-family and other property owners.

This proposed fee will be used to address long overdue maintenance/replacement of the storm drain utility that runs throughout our town. It is exactly the same as a sewer, electricity, or phone/internet bill that all of us (including the schools) are already paying. In fact, it can easily be argued that the storm water utility fee is something we all should have been paying all along.

For the Moraga School District for instance, the fee is calculated to be \$21,400 per year for all of their properties, which equates to 1/10th of 1 percent of their annual \$23 million budget. Or put in other terms, approximately \$12 per student per year.

For the average homeowner, the fee will be \$120 per year or about \$10 per month (two lattes at the new Starbucks).

In my view this is a very small price to pay to avoid future sinkholes/disruptions in our town, maintain our overall quality of life and preserve safe drinking water reservoirs for all East Bay Area residents.

Please open your ballot when you receive it in the mail, check "Yes", sign it, and mail it back in the pre-paid postage-free envelope.

Bret Lorie, Bess Inzeo, and Serina Culleton
Teachers in Moraga School District

A request for yes on storm drain fee

Moraga has a problem - a big problem - a problem that needs attention. It needs attention now.

Our public storm drain system is old and deteriorating. Conspicuous failures tell the story - the Rheem Boulevard sinkhole that disrupted traffic for a year; failure of this same pipe 40 feet away 10 years earlier; flooding of the Pavilion on the Hacienda grounds in 2006, caused by a failing culvert on the same drainage creek.

Yes, there is a problem, no matter what the naysayers claim. The next sinkhole is just a matter of time. Who knows how serious.

The Town has proposed a solution to avoid failures causing disruption and flooding. But the program will cost a lot of money - money the Town does not have. No matter how much the Town tightens its belt, no savings could be realized that would dent the program cost. New revenue is essential.

Some say the Town has no credible plan. Experts say otherwise. What is certain is that the problems will not just go away. Deferring the work will only cost more as storm drain system deterioration continues. The proposed solution is a positive step toward solving the problem. Naysayers have yet to propose a credible alternative - not one.

The property-related fee program is based on the Prop 218 rules that were developed by the Jarvis-Gann Taxpayer group who also brought us Prop 13. It offers a reasonable way to assess property owners to fix the problem. A majority of voting property owners must approve in order to enact the fee measure. Sure, schools and churches will be assessed. They contribute to storm water runoff, no matter what the naysayers claim. The storm drain fee would be just like the charges property owners pay for all other utilities. If the fee is not enacted, no future Town Council is likely to try again to pass any kind of measure any time soon. Meanwhile, the storm drain system continues to rot. It's time to act. Please do the sensible thing. Vote YES. Be sure to sign your ballots before mailing to the Town.

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