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Orinda sets aside over \$100K to improve Brookwood Road after fuels mitigation



Image provided

By Sora O'Doherty

The unintended consequences of removing dead trees and brush from between Brookwood Road and High-

way 24 left local residents feeling exposed to the danger of cars accidentally exiting the freeway, increased noise, and having their homes exposed to lights and views from which they had previously been protected.

The Orinda City Council moved quickly to reassure residents that their concerns would be addressed by the city.

In the Capital Improvement Projects plan, \$10,000 had been allocated for the study of the problem. In adopting the plan and the biennial budget at a special meeting on June 29, the city council also set aside an additional \$100,000 towards the work, after a plan has been agreed upon. The additional funds were bookmarked for Brookwood Road at the suggestion of Vice Mayor Dennis Fay, with the approval of the rest of the city council, with the exception of Council Member Nick Kosla who was not present owing to an excused absence.

Mayor Amy Worth expressed her appreciation to staff for not only dealing quickly with complaints from the residents of the area, but for also considering the aesthetic effects in addition to the safety concerns.

Director of Public Works Larry Theis presented the council with a number of possible alternatives that could improve the area. The section of land that borders Brookwood on one side and Highway 24 on the other side varies both in width and elevation. Starting near the curve of

Brookwood to Spring Road there is very little separation between the road and the freeway, and the land is very flat there. However, as Brookwood approaches downtown Orinda, the distance between the road and the freeway increases up to 40 feet, and the elevation of Brookwood over Highway 24 rises from flat to 8 to 10 feet, or about a two-to-one ratio.

There are several pieces of protection currently in place alongside the highway and maintained by Caltrans. This said that staff has been meeting with Caltrans and the Contra Costa Transportation Authority to consider alternatives. He included in the staff report photographs and explanations of a number of different types of barriers that could be considered, ranging from chain link fencing, perhaps with artificial foliage on it, to dark tinted polycarbonate sheets that would function as a sort of sound wall as well as a barrier.

Theis said that the next steps will include involving a landscape architect, approaching the neighborhood to get feedback about preferred alternatives, and cooperating with other agencies.

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