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Chamber of Commerce:
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The Orinda Association:
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City Council Regular Meeting:
 Tuesday, March 1, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only
Planning Commission
 Tuesday, Feb. 22, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only
Traffic Safety Advisory Committee Special Meeting
 Monday, Feb. 28, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only

Orinda struggles to meet competing interests of pedestrian safety and safe fire access



Speed Cushions

Courtesy Staff Report

By Sora O'Doherty

The city of Orinda was forced to confront a dilemma at its Feb. 1 city council meeting, when Moraga-Orinda Fire District chief Dave Winnacker told the council that he had not received sufficient information to approve the installation of speed cushions on Dalewood Drive. The fire chief has said that he could approve the projects if the community would agree to offset the speed cushions by 20 feet on either side of the road. However, Orinda's Traffic Safety Advisory Committee opposed that idea, fearing it would lead to vehicles swerving from one side of the road to the other to avoid the speed cushions.

Under consideration was whether or not the city should appeal the denial of approval to the MOFD. The proposal for traffic calming on Dalewood Drive has been in progress for more than three years.

In the staff report, acting Public Works Director Scott Christie said that the MOFD has not objected to speed cushions in the past. TSAC had unanimously recom-

mended that the city council direct staff to appeal the MOFD's rejection of speed cushions without a 20-foot offset. Other alternatives suggested were to accept the MOFD revision and move forward with installing the speed cushions with an offset of at least 20 feet or to advise TSAC that alternate traffic control measures should be considered for the location.

In public comments, TSAC chair Travis Miller said he was fully supportive of an appeal. "The process has been long and arduous," he said, and is not a technical issue.

Dana Wentworth spoke about working on speed cushions on Sleepy Hollow. "We want to put traffic calming measures in our neighborhood. There are 100 pedestrians getting out of school from November to May," she said, adding, "If you decide not to install speed cushions, you might as well dissolve TSAC."

Brandon Hedou, a new member of TSAC, recommended appealing the MOFD decision. "We shouldn't allow MOFD to trump a well thought out decision," he said. In his opinion, speed

cushions are more important now than ever because a lot of people are working from home, which means more pedestrians are out on the streets.

During council discussion, Council Member Nick Kosla, while agreeing with comments from Council Member Amy Worth about the need for better pedestrian and bike access, concluded that if the city chose to appeal the fire chief's decision, they would lose.

Christy told the council that in the past the city has not submitted a formal document. Winnacker submitted both written correspondence in advance of the meeting and attended the meeting to explain his position, which was that the data required by the city itself was not presented to him, leaving him without a basis to approve the installation. Winnacker said, "Approving an obstruction of the sole evacuation route from a wildland urban interface fire area requires particular diligence in order to provide for public safety." He also debunked the notion that fire vehicles could use nearby private roads. They cannot, he said.

Worth opined that there has been a "huge national effort for pedestrians and biking. We have to provide for traffic calming in a big way." She suggested that, rather than pursuing a formal appeal, the city "find a way to figure out how to adjust or amend our policies to take what we have and put it together in a form that meets the needs of MOFD."

Kosla agreed. "Why not go with the practical approach and provide the chief with information to convince him that the neighborhood will be safe?" he suggested.

Council Member Darlene Gee agreed with her colleagues. "We have demonstrated to chief Winnacker how deeply we care about fire safety," she noted, but added that "to hire a consultant to provide the quantitative study the chief is asking for would be an extraordinary waste of money. We don't have the money to conduct a study that would not provide the required numbers."

Although Winnacker pointed out that he was just asking for things explicitly provided for in the city's own policy, Worth said that things had changed and that the policy needs to be reexamined. "We've got to do everything we can," she said, "to slow down traffic, particularly where people are walking."

Vice Mayor Inga Miller spoke about the uptick in speeding traffic during the pandemic, coupled with more people wanting to get out and walk. "That is a terrible combination," she concluded. Mayor Dennis Fay agreed that the policy needs to be reviewed. "This is a complicated balancing act of safety concerns," he said. He does not believe that a full-blown traffic study is required on any residential road.

In the end, the council decided not to formally appeal the MOFD's decision yet, but to have staff put together a document explaining the city's decision that speed cushions are the right choice for Dalewood Drive. Winnacker agreed that the MOFD could be flexible about the time limits for appeal in order to allow the city to submit its documentation. That approach received unanimous approval from the council.

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Lamorinda in great shape to meet new recycling law

... continued from Page A1

This will include residential bins, but citations and fines for non-compliance will be limited to commercial bins. Businesses are divided into two tiers. In Orinda, there are only two Tier One businesses, Republic of Cake (because they sell product wholesale) and Safeway, which is already largely doing what is required. Tier Two includes the country club and schools, and they will be required to partici-

pate in food recovery. This work is already underway with White Pony Express, The Muffin People and the Recycle Smart Food Recovery Program. Through White Pony Express and The Muffin People, edible food is being collected in Lamorinda and elsewhere and distributed to different nonprofits in Oakland via a safe and consistent delivery system, according to Silver.

Additional requirements of the new law for businesses, including the city

government, include assuring that paper purchases have recycled content. Orinda is participating, and will save about \$55,000, Silver said. She also said that there will not be fines for residents, only for businesses.

Council Member Inga Miller, who also serves on the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority along with Council Member Amy Worth, asked Silver where the money will come from for the new initiatives. Silver responded that through their rates they already have the infrastructure in place. Eighty percent of the new requirements are around food recovery, and they received a grant to help White Pony Express expand its services and a block grant in the last state budget of around \$250,000 for the next two years. After that, funding will be through rates.

Worth talked about how interested high school students are in the environment, including the reduction of methane gas. She noted that clean, unused food from restaurants is used by the East Bay Municipal Water District, which converts it to energy to power its filter plant and sewage treat-

ment. Council Member Darlene Gee inquired about the program under which residents can get compost from Republic Services. Silver confirmed that the program is still active and she would like to increase the program. Manager of Recycle Smart's composting program, Ashley Louisiana, confirmed after the meeting that there is an annual compost giveaway coordinated with Republic Services. There is a one-day event in the Lamorinda area (last year in Lafayette) and a one-day event in the Danville/Walnut Creek area. "I try to host the event in May each year for International Compost Awareness Week," Louisiana added.

In public comments, Charles Porges said that he has been composting his own yard waste for 40 to 50 years, and asked if there is a discount available for doing so. Silver replied that indeed, home composters are eligible for a discount, and the information is available on the Recycle Smart website. Jules Forgarty commented that "if food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gasses after U.S. and China."

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White Pony Express introduces new app to make food donation easier

White Pony Express has a new tool in its mission to end hunger in Contra Costa County: a new app. Restaurants and caterers can download the app and sign up to be a "food rescue hero." Once the food safety training has been completed, the restaurant or caterer can claim a food run via the app. No long-term commitment is needed. In as little as an hour, surplus food can be picked up for delivery to neighbors in need, according to the nonprofit: "Food rescue pickups can be set up on a regular schedule or just as a one-time event. Food rescue prevents healthy, fresh food from being wasted by delivering it to those who can use it."

White Pony Express was founded by Dr. Carol Weyland Conner in September 2013 on the simple idea that supermarkets had excess food that was being thrown out while people who couldn't afford food were going hungry. In addition to the app, restaurants and catering company can set up regular or one-time food rescue pickups by contacting Pete Olsen at peterolsen@whiteponyexpress.org.

- S. O'Doherty