



See public meetings schedule on this pages and 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

City Council

Regular Meeting:
 Tuesday, June 7, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only
Planning Commission
 Tuesday, June 14, 7 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only
Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission
 Monday, June 8, 6:30 p.m.
 By Teleconference Only

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Hookah proponents fail at last ditch attempt to get exemption from flavored tobacco ban

By Sora O'Doherty

Although it is unusual for there to be much discussion about city ordinances when they come back to the council for second reading, the Orinda ordinance banning the sale of flavored tobacco products was the exception, and was pulled from the consent calendar on May 17 to allow for further public comments. The comments were divided into two camps: proponents of the continued use of flavored tobacco products in hookahs, and opponents of any use of flavored tobacco at all. City council members were not swayed, and proceeded to adopt the ordinance banning all sale of flavored tobacco in Orinda without change. The new ordinance will become effective on June 16, 30 days after adoption.

The discussion included a face-off between Thomas Lawton, government affairs representative of Fumari, Inc., a hookah manufacturer, and Mayra Lopez, Contra Costa County Health Services program manager of the Tobacco Prevention Project. Lawton, in both written and oral comments, accused the county of misleading the city by providing false information in order to fit the county's political agenda.

In response, Lopez submitted a red-lined version of the county's earlier letter of support for the proposed ban on flavored tobacco products. Although there were some differences, Lopez continued to assert that there is rising hookah use among youths and that any tobacco use is dangerous and deleterious to health. That position was strongly

supported by Jen Grand-Lejano of the American Cancer Society and a Contra Costa County resident. She specializes in local tobacco control, she said, because tobacco is a unique product that "when used, kills half its users."

Jimmy Ancira submitted both written and oral comments addressing the issue of whether members of the LGBTQ community are more susceptible to hookah use. Ancira said that hookah use is a gateway to other tobacco products, and told of how this occurred in his own life. "As a Latin gay male," he said, "I have witnessed firsthand how flavored hookah hooks vulnerable youth and leads them to use other types of tobacco products."

The issue of hookah use in the LGBTQ community was addressed on the other side by

George Johnson, a manufacturer of wooden hookah pipes, who identified as a gay man. Johnson countered the argument that had been made that flavored tobacco products began in the 1990s, but rather, he said, the use goes back some 400 years. Tobacco for hookah use has always been flavored. He also alleged that hookah use in California is on the decline.

Alexandra Winston told the city council how in 2017 her son started vaping, and in 2019 her husband tried vaping as a route to quit smoking. Her husband died, leaving her a single parent of four. Her son continues to vape. She argued that what was before the council was a question of health equity. "No business should profit off people's lives," she concluded.

Orinda joins nation in proclaiming May as Jewish-American heritage month

By Sora O'Doherty

Following the lead of U.S. President Joseph Biden, the Orinda City Council declared

May to be Jewish-American heritage month by adoption of a proclamation, which states, in part, "during Jewish American heritage month, the city of Orinda celebrates the heartfelt progress won through the struggle and sacrifice of Jewish Americans, and we rededicate ourselves to building a world where diversity is cherished and faith is protected."

The proclamation goes on to praise the vibrant culture and life of the Jewish American community, while acknowledging that they have experienced prejudice and discrimination, and that Jewish communities continue to confront hostility and bigotry, including in America. "The city of Orinda shares the obligation to condemn and combat antisemitism and hatred wherever it exists," the proclamation continues.

It recognizes that American Jews have "worked tirelessly to strengthen the promise of religious freedom and civil rights in the United States by joining together with all faiths to reject ignorance and intolerance, teach empathy and compassion, and root out hatred wherever it exists." Reflecting on the greater

history of the Jews, the proclamation notes that "through our understanding and study of the holocaust, we know the human devastation that can come from systematic prejudice, and are compelled to 'never forget.'"

The federal proclamation explains that the first Jews to arrive in America were 23 refugees who landed in New York in 1654.

Noting that the inspirational poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty was written by Jewish-American poet Emma Lazarus, Biden recently said, "Throughout our country's history, Jewish Americans have proudly served our Nation in uniform, in elected office, and on our nation's highest courts. They have made enormous contributions to America's cultural, scientific, artistic, and intellectual life, and they have marched, petitioned, and boarded buses to demand civil and political rights for all — from women's rights to voting rights to workers' rights."

The Orinda proclamation invites people to visit www.jewishheritage-month.gov to learn more about the heritage and contributions of Jewish Americans.

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