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Strong win likely for Orinda school parcel tax

By Sora O'Doherty

At the close of polls on March 7, Measure Z, the parcel tax for Orinda schools, was looking like passing with a three-quarters majority, while only a two-thirds majority was required for passage. This special election for the parcel tax was the only election in Contra Costa County on March 7. On March 10 the Department of Elections released the first interim update, showing that yes votes stood at 4,925, representing 76.49% of the vote, and no votes stood at 1,514,

representing 23.51% of the votes. Turnout for the measure was high at nearly 43%. The target date for the count to be certified is March 17.

The results of the vote on Measure Z, which it seems will be Orinda's third school parcel tax, were similar to the two previous elections for parcel taxes. In 2003, Measure A, which provides the school district with \$385 per parcel, passed with 5,733 votes, which was a 75% pass rate. In 2009, Measure B, which provides the district with an additional \$124 per parcel passed with a 70.75% pass rate of 5,384 yes

votes. Both measures A and B continue indefinitely.

Measure Z will provide the schools with an additional \$295 per parcel for a limited 7-year period and is anticipated to provide somewhat over \$2 million per year for Orinda schools. Because the district called a special election, they were required to pay the costs of the election, which were estimated by the Contra Costa Department of Elections to be between \$120,000 and \$180,000.

Measures A and B allowed for an exemption for senior citizens over the age of 65 on limited incomes. According to Debbie Jamieson, executive assistant to the superintendent of the Orinda Union School District, there are 194 parcels that avail of this exemption. The total number of parcels subject to the parcel tax is currently 7,920, Jamieson said.

The exemption from the Measure Z parcel tax differs from those for the previous parcel taxes in that there is no

income requirement. Any senior citizen over the age of 65 is entitled to claim an exemption from the new parcel tax. In order to do so, an application must be submitted by May 1, for tax year 2023-24. Along with the application, the applicant must submit proof of age and some documentation, such as a utility bill or property tax bill, indicating that the applicant is the owner of the property and that it is the applicant's primary place of residence.

The form is available at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Lq-lZwy_-P8Luj2GA2ITa8NqfKUIT2ws/view

Orinda makes appointments to committees and commissioners, but needs more

By Sora O'Doherty

Ann Parnigoni, chair of the Orinda Planning Commission, has been reappointed for another term. However, the city is still looking for applicants for the remaining two vacant positions on the Planning Commission. There are also two vacancies on the Finance Advisory Committee and one on the County Connection Citizens Advisory Committee.

Other appointments to Orinda committees and commissions include Alex Drexel

and Laura Riley to the Parks and Recreation Commission; Rachelle Latimer, Paula Reinman and Chris Decareau to the Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission; Bill Waterman, Jeffrey Lyon and Jeanne HuangLi to the Historical Landmarks Committee; Rich Thompson to Art in Public Places; Steven Schnier and Nicholas Mitchell to the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, and Shrikant Garde to

the County Library Commission.

If you have an interest in serving in any of the vacant positions, the city encourages you to apply by filling out a Statement of Interest and submitting it to Orinda City Clerk Sheri Smith at ssmith@cityoforinda.org. Interviews will be scheduled with the City Council in early April.

The Statement of Interest can be found at <https://cityoforinda.org/DocumentCenter/View/2320/Statement-of-Interest-Form-Updated-2-15-18>

Trimble likes Bigbellies, 'and he cannot lie'



Photos Sora O'Doherty

By Sora O'Doherty

Director of Parks and Rec, Todd Trimble, waxed lyrical over the success of the Bigbelly trash and recycling receptacles in Orinda, as he presented a staff report on renewing the contract for the highly successful bins. The adoption of the Bigbelly Bins led to immediate improvements, Trimble said. Where previously recycling materials had been contaminated and unusable, suddenly they were uncontaminated and usable.

Trimble also spoke about issues that had occurred and been resolved during the first contract, such as making sure that the receptacles can be lifted by RecycleSmart trucks, as well as replacing the batteries that run the compacting feature. Trimble admitted that he's obsessed with the item called Collection Efficiency, which he looks at every day on his desktop computer, laptop or phone.

Prior to adopting Bigbelly receptacles, the city had a total of 126 public trash and recycling receptacles that needed to be emptied frequently. Only 34% of the locations offered recycling as well as trash collection. For example, there was no recycling service available at the Wilder sports complex, where, the staff report says, thousands of athletes and spectators visit each year.

Other drawbacks to the prior system were that there were no preventative measures against individuals and pests accessing waste material, resulting in rummaging and harvesting of the contents of the bins. Together with wind, this resulted in uncleanliness in the surrounding areas. Further, staff were forced to make contact with virtually every bin on a daily basis, in addition to having to expend time and resources to collect wind-blown and scattered trash.

The city first entered into a five-year agreement with Bigbelly in January 2018. Since then, Bigbelly's "CLEAN" software has allowed city staff and collection personnel to have complete transparency to monitor and track both short and long-term program success. Through 2021, the Smart Waste Operations resulted in over 200,000 gallons of waste and recycling being collected with 81% efficiency, a 44% recycling diversion rate, an 86% reduction in monthly collections, and a significant reduction in plastic bag use and cost.

In addition to the great success of the program, staff anticipates that payment for the next five-year service agreement can be covered by funding withdrawn from the Contra Costa County Solid Waste Authority (RecycleSmart) joint powers authority member reserve funds. And, as an added bonus, the bins are a place where Artify Orinda can display artworks by local artists.

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