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## Outgoing City Manager's report focuses on recent crime

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Crime statistics are usually gone over in February or March, Sullivan said, but crime numbers in Orinda have gone down.

The chief wanted to clarify that contrary to social media reports, the victim in Orinda was not surrounded by suspects, but by one person in particular, although there were additional people in a vehicle. And he wanted to urge residents to report anything they believe is suspicious by calling the police, not

by putting it on social media.

Biggs added that some people may be reluctant to call 911, but advised that the best course of action is to telephone the OPD non-emergency number. The chief noted that residents calling the non-emergency line, (925) 646-2441, may get through even faster than calling 911 from a cell phone. There is a phone tree, he explained, but it's quick, and the response time is usually two to three minutes. He advised residents to

watch for unusual things, giving the example of your neighbor's garage door being open when it is usually closed, and the neighbors are not at home.

Additionally, Sullivan promised to expand coffee with the cops, perhaps moving to a monthly event. He reminded people to never leave anything in their vehicles. He said he was strongly for a town hall on crime and what residents can do to prevent crime, as well as supporting neighborhood watch programs.

The council also approved an executive search path for replacing Biggs as city manager, while engaging in some good-natured digs about his priorities, choosing his wife and family over his position with the city.

Biggs, who will be with the city for an additional five months, noted that it was a tough decision. "I have really enjoyed my time in Orinda," Biggs responded, "and I'd like to believe that I'm too young to really retire,"

but he explained that his son and his wife and their children have moved to Los Angeles, and Biggs and his wife plan to move also to be closer to them.

## Council considers whether red flag day parking restrictions are too much

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda residents shared their opinions on signage and parking prohibitions on red flag days with the City Council on Jan. 23. The council accepted the input and deferred making any decisions on the issue, asking staff to do some further research and bring the matter back at a later date.

Assistant Engineer Kevin McCourt presented the staff report and gave a brief history of the program. He explained that fire season is now from June to November, and although there may be as many as 20 to 30 red flag days per year, over the past two years there have been only about 14 events, with only one last year.

The red flag day parking program was originally started as a pilot, then put into place on a permanent basis on El Toyonal. The program prohibits street parking on red flag days when the danger of fire is severe and evacuations may be required. After the pilot program was successfully implemented, the city council requested staff to expand the program based on the evacuation routes for northern Orinda.

In July 2022 the council approved red flag sign installations on key evacuation routes. Since then, according to the staff report, issues have been raised regarding the need for red flag day restrictions on

Dalewood, the number and types of signs on Miner Road and other streets in the expanded area, the criteria used to expand the program, and how evacuation routes are defined. The current evacuation routes were established as part of the Safety Element update approved Jan. 31, 2023.

In public comment on the expanded program, the first commenter opined that the program should be terminated and existing signs should be removed. Flipping the signs on red flag days is a waste of staff time and placing signs where parking at any time is impossible were also cited as a waste of time and money.

Liz Boyle raised the issue of signs being flipped on Dalewood on Christmas Eve, when there was no fire danger. "I don't know how it happened," she said, but it took days to get the sign flipped back up, and other signs were flipped on Happy Valley and Sundown Terrace in late December.

Lisa Rudolf stated that while she didn't "want to beat a dead horse," the red flag warning signs had been requested by residents on El Toyonal following a community forum, but she said that there was no forum and Dalewood residents did not request the signs. "Very few people park on Dalewood," she

added, "and if there is a fire heading towards Dalewood there won't be any cars parked there."

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