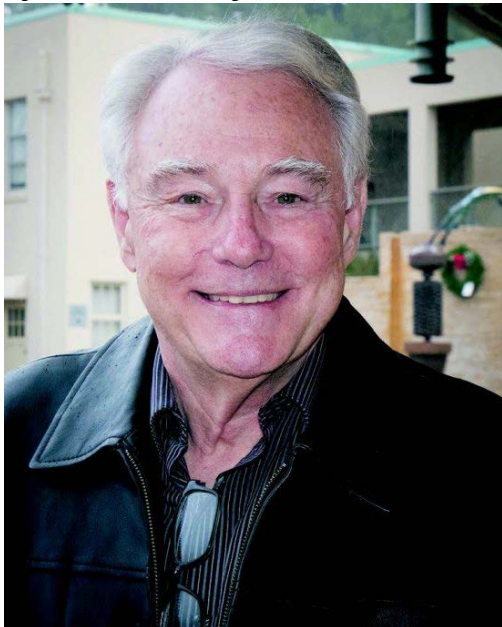


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Master transportation engineer joins Orinda council with an eye on downtown development

By Sora O'Doherty



Council Member Dennis Fay Photo Sora O'Doherty

New Orinda Council Member Dennis Fay says that the city has a responsibility to assist the Bay Area to shoulder some housing needs, but, he adds, "tailored to the needs of Orinda."

"I can't tell you how many people I spoke to during the campaign who want an option to have an 1,800- to 2,000-square foot condo with services." He's not talking about low income options, but of people living in Orinda who want to downsize from their larger homes and who are ready to be close to downtown to enjoy the services available there. He is also concerned about housing for people who serve the community but currently cannot afford to live here. "It would be wonderful to have teachers and city staff living within our community," Fay says.

Fay doesn't believe that the downtown needs multistory buildings, but he supports a maximum limit of three stories at street level, which, he notes, may allow for more stories going downhill from Orinda Way. He thinks that what matters is the impression of mass, and supports buildings that step back and also retain the village character. He thinks that Orinda could look to European villages for inspiration. For example, he traveled through villages in Spain and France and thinks that the use of stone could create a European feel in Orinda. He admits that he doesn't favor the California Spanish look.

Turning to the issue of private roads, Fay thinks that it isn't much of an issue where the roads are maintained by a homeowners association, but notes the concern for private roads not maintained by HOAs. He believes that the public policy should be discussed and believes that the issue will return to the city council. "The big issue is money," he says. Perhaps, he muses, residents of private roads should be exempted from future parcel tax measures. Most of all, he believes that it is important that people feel that they are being heard and thinks that there may be room for some accommodation.

Another issue that concerns Fay is fire safety. "Wild fire prevention really is important to me," he says, and suggests that he'd like to see cities partnering with the fire districts. "As an engineer," he says, "I want to prevent things." He talks about how, in the recent Paradise Fire, superheated ash was sucked into attic vents setting homes on fire, and how engineering solutions could prevent that in the future.

Fay was previously a member and chair of the Citizen's Infrastructure Oversight Commission and has been involved in Orinda's effort to repair its roads since the first report on road repair prepared in 2006.

His family has lived in Orinda for more than 20 years, and his children attended Orinda schools. Fay noted that all of his family members have earned master's degrees.

Fay retired from a career of over 40 years in transportation planning and engineering, having served for nearly 20 years as the executive director of what is now called the Alameda County Transportation Commission. Earlier, he was the transportation planning manager for Alameda County.

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