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Green Infrastructure Plan adopted by Orinda

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda City Council unanimously adopted a Green Infrastructure Plan on Aug. 20. The plan, which the city asked staff to develop in 2017, was presented at the city council meeting by Associate Engineer Scott Christie and was developed in collaboration with the city's environmental consultants, Nichols Consulting Engineers, as well as other Contra Costa County municipalities.

What is green infrastructure? Essentially, Christie explained, it is taking stormwater runoff and bringing it into soil and landscaping so that it gets treated to remove pollutants, including polychlorinated biphenols and mercury. The city is required to do this under its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits, and had a deadline of Sept. 30. The methodology for the green infrastructure includes, for example, bioswales around town and in parking lots. Regulations require this kind of treatment for public and private infrastructure, but the city can only provide this on public lands, and can require compliance for new private buildings and for redevelopment projects.

The plan is a long-term one, extending out to 2040. Christie said that staff do not think that Orinda can meet the goals of the program, because the city has very few, if any, old industrial sites. However the plan outlines a process for planning, designing and implementing the project to the year 2040 and provides for both public and private lands. The target treatment area for 2020 is 0.2 acres, rising to 1 acre for 2030 and jumping to 13.4 acres for the last year of the plan, 2040. "Our numbers," Christie said, "are comparable to other cities." The overall cost of the plan is around \$2 million.

In response to a question from the council, Christie explained that where in the past the city was required to put in bioswales if the road was big enough, now the city is being asked to retrofit old roads.

In comments from the council, Council Member Amy Worth said that Orinda is a watershed so having a green infrastructure is really important. She pointed out that such elements are already in place in Wilder, the newest development in Orinda. The council thanked staff for the thorough preparation of the green infrastructure plan, which, after being adopted, will be submitted with the NPDES Annual Report to the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Further information on the city's green infrastructure plan can be found at <https://www.cityoforinda.org/405/Green-Infrastructure>

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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