



Published August 19th, 2020

## Council discusses prohibiting parking on El Toyonal on red flag days, adopts new fire code

By Sora O'Doherty

Although there may be some latitude in how it will be enforced, the Orinda City Council seems favorably disposed to adopting a ban on parking on El Toyonal on red flag days to ensure the ability of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to access the area in the event of emergency and also to facilitate evacuation of residents, if needed. After discussion, the council continued the matter to allow staff to come back with some revisions at its next meeting on Sept. 1. The council also adopted the new fire code immediately, while leaving open the possibility of improvements being adopted in the future.

MOFD Chief David Winnacker, who attended the Zoom council meeting while fighting a fire in northern California, said that when it comes to access, every foot counts. City Manager Steve Salomon pointed out that the requirement will only be effective on red flag days, a relatively small number of days per year, on average from 20 to 30. The main topic of the discussion was how to allow parking on private spaces created by homeowners living on El Toyonal. The council is contemplating how to allow the use of such spaces, while at the same time permitting the widest emergency access. The council members and staff discussed whether the space in which parking is prohibited should be measured from the middle of the road or from the edge. As there is not a continuous center line on El Toyonal, the measurement from the edge of the roadway was considered the clearest. How much clearance was debated. Three feet gets awfully close to the pavement, according to Director of Public Works Larry Theis, five feet would be better, in his opinion, while 10 feet would be great but would defeat the purpose of allowing some parking spaces to be used. Vice Mayor Amy Worth brought up the tragedy of the Highlands fire, when there was a horrifying loss of life, she said, and many who lost their lives were stopped alongside the roadway but were unable to evacuate the area of the fire. It is very important to implement a plan for this year, as the fire season is already upon us, she said.

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