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# Orinda city council joins school board in honoring Asian and Pacific Island Americans in May



Photo provided

By Sora O'Doherty

In the shadow of increasing hate crimes against Asian Americans since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orinda City Council and the board of the Orinda Union School District joined together to proclaim May as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. The proclamation also condemned discrimination and violence toward individuals of Asian descent.

The proclamation acknowledged Asian American and Pacific Islander history, culture, and achievements and recognized "the troubling history of discrimination towards individuals of Asian descent since California's earliest days, as well as the

dramatic increase in the violent and hateful crimes and incidents targeting AAPI communities during the COVID-19 pandemic," while also expressing deep concern.

The joint proclamation committed both the city council and the school board to not tolerating and condemning discrimination and continued acts of violence and hate as well as affirming the values of inclusiveness, humanity, and respect. "We honor AAPI individuals and stand in solidarity with the AAPI community as we work to dismantle systemic racism," the document proclaims.

AAPI heritage month was originated with a congressional bill in June 1977 and President Joseph Biden issued a Presidential Proclamation declaring May as AAPI Heritage month.

Nick Waranoff in public comments said that while he admires the contributions of the AAPI community and particularly deplores the rise in anti-Asian hate crime that

seems to have coincided with the pandemic, he felt that recognizing only a few groups causes others to feel hurt and left out, "as I do." In responding to his particular concerns about the rise of anti-semitism, Mayor Amy Worth explained that she had recently joined over 600 mayors across the United States who signed onto a statement deploring antisemitism at a recent joint meeting of the American Jewish Committee and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Another public speaker, Cathy Finch, congratulated the city council on its action. "I think that it is wonderful that Orinda is trying to become as inclusive as possible," she said. Council Member Inga Miller said, "Our hearts go out to everybody who was affected," and declared that it was a wonderful time to come together and show support.

Council Member Darlene Gee said that she appreciated the opportunity for herself and the mayor to work to-

gether with the school district. "Many of us have or have had children in the school district," she said, and "we have a very significant population of AAPI students." On a personal note, she added, "I am part of a very large and boisterous AAPI family with a lot of family history. I really appreciate this." In moving approval of the proclamation, Vice Mayor Dennis Fay noted that he has a Jewish wife and is the father-in-law of an Asian woman. Seconded by Gee, the measure passed unanimously.

On May 20, President Biden signed into law the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act intended to combat the dramatic increase in hate crimes and violence against Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders. The bill passed the United States Senate with a bipartisan vote of 94-1, with 5 members not voting. In his remarks before signing the bill, Biden said, "Hate can be given no safe harbor in America."

The Contra Costa County public library is celebrating AAPI months with a reading list celebrating Pacific Islander voices and cultures:

[https://ccclib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/1574600649\\_cccl\\_ed/1889256170\\_celebrating\\_pacific\\_islander\\_voices\\_amp\\_cultures?\\_ga=2.145900669.81879060.1621458263-1877293432.1621458263](https://ccclib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/1574600649_cccl_ed/1889256170_celebrating_pacific_islander_voices_amp_cultures?_ga=2.145900669.81879060.1621458263-1877293432.1621458263)

Other library resources for AAPI month can be located at <https://ccclib.org/blogs/post/celebrating-asian-pacific-american-heritage-month/>

## Additional work to be undertaken on San Pablo Creek restoration

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda will spend an addi-

tional \$59,000 on further studies of conditions affecting San Pablo Creek. In fact, the additional work will actually

cost the city only \$27,000, as the project is currently under budget, according to Orinda Planning Director Drummond Buckley. The additional amount needed, about \$27,000, can come from the long range planning fund, Buckley said.

Buckley returned to the Orinda City Council on May 18 to respond to questions that arose at the council's March 16 meeting. He explained that Placeworks proposes a more technical focus on the creek, which Buckley said has been neglected for a long time. The creek, which is an essential component of the city's stormwater drainage system, was rerouted in the 1940s and '50s, after which it was completely ignored. Orinda has never put any money toward the issue of the creek since the city was incorporated in 1985, Buckley added.

He gave the council a presentation aimed at explaining why the additional expenditures on the creek are now required. San Pablo Creek is a potential natural amenity, as well as a pedestrian and/or bicycle corridor. He pointed out that other communities have capitalized on creeks in their commercial areas, and that there is a lot of community support for restoring San Pablo Creek, which is currently undergrounded as it passes through downtown Orinda.

The planning director talked about the restoration plans that have been prepared by the Friends of the Orinda Creeks at no expense to the city. He also explained to the council how further study of the creek will be useful in the development of the upcoming Downtown Precise Plan and Housing Element. For example, the data provided from the studies will help the city establish the top of the riverbank and the minimum setback requirements for buildings along the creek. Further, he said, the data will facilitate a substantive discussion of safety and flood risks within downtown Orinda. The location of property lines relative to the creek and surrounding features (retaining walls, outfalls, etc.) will be very useful for the work on the impending housing element.

The creek has not been modeled since 1990, Buckley added, noting that the creek has changed since then. A detailed survey will help determine how things change over time. He also speculated that the concrete channel is not in the best shape right now. Reminding the council of the major disaster that occurred on another Orinda creek and caused the Miner Road sink-hole, Buckley urged proactive identification of existing deficiencies in creek functionality.

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**City Council Regular Meeting:**  
 Tuesday, June 1, 7 p.m.  
 By Teleconference Only  
**Planning Commission**  
 Tuesday, June 8, 7 p.m.  
 By Teleconference Only