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## Orinda's Candidates Answer the Critical Questions

By Andrea A. Firth

When the candidates for City Council were asked about their vision of Orinda in the next five years, incumbents Victoria Smith and Steve Glazer identified fixing Orinda's crumbling roads as their number one priority, and newcomer, Dr. Bob Larsen, focused on the need to promote commercial growth in the City.

"My vision for Orinda is one in which our citizens have safe roads," states Smith who estimates the cost of repair at \$100 000,000. "Fixing Orinda's roads will require additional resources, including grant money, increased fees, redirecting funds within the City's budget, potential benefit assessment districts, and potential taxes... Roads are my first priority."

Glazer agreed that the poor condition of Orinda's roads is his top area of concern noting that the City inherited 92 miles of substandard roads and drains upon incorporation and that 40% of Orinda's roads are now in failure condition. "I'm running for re-election to the Council, because I don't think we can afford to give up on this problem. We need to bring the community together and find a consensus solution. We will never be able to please everyone, especially when it comes to new taxation," states Glazer. "I hope the residents and the new City Council will roll up their sleeves and work for an achievable solution to this vexing problem."

Larsen has pinned his vision for Orinda to the City's commercial business potential. "Increasing business in Orinda is important, because Orinda needs sales and commercial property tax revenues to meet city expenses and school costs," states Larsen. "We should develop a successful business plan using a consulting firm with a track record of revitalizing small city downtown districts," he adds. "Identifying existing business needs as well as products and services desired by Orindans will allow us to build for success. The type of new businesses may well include a small luxury hotel, a medical supply store, and a sporting goods shop, amongst others."

The three candidates are unified in their responses regarding Orinda's need to be prepared for a potential natural disaster such as a major earthquake or fire. Both Smith and Glazer note that the City government is already working to ensure residents are prepared in the event of a catastrophe.

"We know it's not a question of 'if' but 'when', and for that reason, we created the Orinda Public Safety Advisory Commission," states Smith. "That Commission has done a tremendous job of training CERT volunteers, forming Neighborhood Watch Groups, raising public awareness and conducting emergency drills, and is preparing a list of local medical volunteer professionals," she adds.

Glazer is on board with Smith's assessments of Orinda's government efforts thus far. "This is a huge priority for Orinda," states Glazer, "I was the author of our new Public Safety Commission, because emergency preparedness must be front and center for our City every day."

Dr. Larsen brought his perspective as physician to the discussion of disaster preparation identifying the need for a roster of clinicians and a vaccination program." I feel confident that our police and fire departments will respond professionally. During a crisis, they will need the help of doctors, nurses, and counselors within our community," states Larsen. "Last year people in Orinda went without flu vaccinations," he adds. "Orinda should work with the County, the California Department of Health, and other agencies to develop a program for vaccinating seniors, residents with respiratory conditions and public safety officers."

So who are the two to choose in this top-two winners take all election? Let's allow the candidates to tell us.

"As Mayor, I've met many young people, and I always tell them that they must exercise their right to vote, and with that right, comes the obligation to give back to the community," states Smith. "I bring a history of volunteering in Orinda and getting things done locally, and with citizen support, I hope to continue that work."

"I have experience as a community volunteer working for our schools, parks, and fire district along with my service as a Mayor and City Council member," states Glazer. "I have a strong commitment to open and accessible government that focuses on problem solving and fiscal restraint and accountability. I want to continue our work to promote improvements to our planning and design review process, increase public safety and emergency preparedness activities, and direct the most city resources possible toward fixing our roads."

And from Dr. Bob Larsen, the Alternative..."As a successful businessman for over two decades, I will bring a new set of skills and ideas to our Council. I will encourage others previously uninvolved to participate. Unlike my opponents I will not take campaign money from PACs, lobbyists & special interests. We can and should do better."

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