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Published October 15th, 2008

## City Council Plays it Safe

Andrea A. Firth

Keeping it safe was on the minds of Orinda City Councilmembers last week. Two of the important issues discussed at the Council's most recent meeting were how to keep drivers and pedestrians safe on Ivy Drive and how to keep Orinda's long-term investments safe during the current economic turmoil.

### Ivy Drive Traffic Calming Debate Continues

How to manage the traffic problems on Ivy Drive has been discussed, debated, and analyzed by residents of the area, the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC), City Staff, and the City Council for over two years. Few would argue that the speed of traffic Ivy Drive, a main conduit to Del Rey Elementary, Orinda Intermediate, and Miramonte High Schools, presents a significant hazard. Yet, a mutually satisfactory solution to reduce the speed on Ivy has proven difficult to identify.

As an initial step forward to implementing traffic calming measures on Ivy Drive, the Council was presented with a resolution to add a stop sign on Arroyo Drive where it intersects Ivy Drive. In response, residents of both Arroyo and Ivy Drives presented objections to the proposed stop sign. "It's not what we need," noted an Arroyo Drive resident who has lived in the neighborhood for over 20 years. "The problem is the speeding on Ivy. What we need is stop signs on Ivy."

A traffic engineering analysis had determined that a 3-way stop at Ivy and Arroyo Drives was not warranted because there had been no recent collisions at the intersection and vehicle traffic did not reach the minimum volume required for stop signage (300 vehicles per hour on the major street, i.e., Ivy). However, the engineers' analysis did suggest that a stop sign could be placed on Arroyo to caution drivers to stop before turning onto Ivy Drive. Councilmember Amy Worth questioned the thought process noting that traffic calming on Ivy Drive would not be achieved with a stop sign on Arroyo.

The stop sign resolution debate segued to a discussion of the status adding speed cushions in four locations on Ivy Drive. City Manager Janet Keeter explained that the process, which requires approval by 70% of street residents affected and by all homeowners whose properties directly abut the cushions, had stalled because some of the residents with properties adjacent to the proposed cushions had not responded for or against. Keeter planned to contact the non-responders directly to determine if the cushion placement would require revision.

After further discussion, the Council agreed to table the Arroyo stop sign decision and planned to address the Ivy Drive matter when a more comprehensive solution was presented.

"I encourage us to move forward expeditiously and to come back with a comprehensive solution," stated Mayor Pro Tem Sue Severson, who sits on the TSAC, "Speed cushions, although not perfect, have been the best solution [considered]...these neighbors are living with this situation everyday," she added.

### Update on the City of Orinda's Long-term Investments

Rob Garner, who has served as Treasurer for the City of Orinda in a volunteer capacity since 2000, provided the Council with a brief update on the City's long-term investments, which are held, in part, in U.S. Treasury notes and corporate bonds, and answered questions regarding the impact of the economic downturn on the safety of these assets. Garner explained that the City only purchases bonds with a rating of A or better, and no more than 30% of the total investment pie is

kept in corporate bonds at anytime. The majority of the bonds held have consistently maintained ratings of A or better, however, Garner noted that a holding with CIT Group had recently been downgraded to an A- rating. Although CIT Group is a commercial financial operation, Garner noted that the company is not involved with risky financial instruments (credit default swaps, collateralizing debt); and the downgrade was not reflective of the company's stability but was more likely a result of the nervousness in the marketplace.

Councilmember Amy Worth pointed out that Orinda has only invested in fixed interest bonds. "We are not involved in variable interest bonds," noted Worth. "So we are not facing the problems some other agencies in the area are having to deal with." Garner concurred noting that Orinda will receive the full value of the bonds if held to maturity.

Councilmember Steve Glazer proposed that they consider setting a higher safety standard for bond purchases within their investment policy. Both Glazer and Mayor Pro Tem Sue Severson recommended greater diversification by industry sector for the corporate bonds purchased.

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