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## City of Orinda Hosts Quad-Agencies Emergency Preparedness Meeting

*By Lucy Amaral*

In an effort to maximize emergency preparedness for Orinda, the Orinda City Council convened a quad-agencies board meeting October 22 to discuss plans, efforts, communications and cooperation options between agencies. The meeting included representatives and board members from Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD), Orinda Union School District (OUSD), Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD), and Orinda City Council members. According to Orinda Mayor Sue Severson, the purpose of the meeting is to have multiple agencies that serve the same population have an opportunity to discuss topics of mutual interest allowing greater understanding and collaboration. "It is helpful to meet face to face with other local elected officials to establish better working relationships and allow meaningful discussion," said Severson.

The meeting included reports from each entity regarding its current disaster preparedness plan, recent practice drills and areas of opportunity to improve. Existing emergency notification options include reverse 911 calls, telephone alerts from School Districts, email blasts to pre-established lists, and even going door-to-door if necessary. Severson noted that the City's web site has been updated with a variety of emergency preparedness information and has a site for Orindans to add their email address to the system. "There is a great need to increase the number of citizens we can communicate with directly in a timely manner by email, in addition to web site postings," she said. The repeated concern raised by the City Council was optimizing communication between the agencies during an emergency. While no specific options were adopted, Severson said that discussions such as these allow respective staffs to coordinate their efforts toward accomplishing mutual goals.

However, added Severson, funding for these efforts is a struggle. "Sufficient revenue to effectively allow for needed communication, emergency and safety improvements is an ongoing need for the City," said Severson. "Current stressed local agency budgets and ongoing state financial woes unfortunately do not allow the city and school to deliver core services without additional community support." Also on the agenda was an item titled: Building Healthy Communities. Some members in attendance expressed concern regarding consequences (or lack thereof) because of some Orinda students' off-campus troubles and asked what might be done. The roundtable discussion included acknowledging the legal restrictions involving communication about minors, as well as comments by Miramonte High School's new principal, Adam Clark, who spoke at length regarding the efforts the high school is taking to create a positive, inclusive, healthy environment for the students as well as promoting outreach to involve parents as much as possible.

Severson ended the meeting noting that while the last quad-agencies meeting was three years ago, she would like to see this meeting be held annually to help ensure continuity and progress.

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