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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

On Saturday, February 4, 2012 at 3:15pm, I was held up by a gunman, who forcibly took my purse and drove off. My sister and I were in a parking lot in a busy Lafayette parking lot. As unnerving as the experience was, I must relate my deep appreciation to the two women who stepped up as witnesses, taking their busy Saturday afternoon to give me support, waiting for the police to respond, and giving accounts to the officers. The officers who responded are to be commended for their diligence and respect for my well being. Officer Jacqueline Dennison arranged to have a colleague follow me home. We met an officer from my community, and the two of them searched my house before allowing me to enter. I was also fortunate to experience outstanding police work from BART Police, who recovered much of my stolen property and returned it to me Tuesday morning. Officer Dennison maintained contact with BART Police and me, furnishing updates on the robbery. Rather than feeling victimized, I feel lucky to have been assisted by two citizens and supported by the coordinated efforts of three police departments. I wish that every community could afford its members such positive service.

Thank you,

Rosemary Jenckes
Pleasant Hill

Editor:

The miserable roads in Orinda do need repair. The big question is: How should the repair work be financed? Before asking voters for a tax increase, the Orinda City Council should look carefully at cutting costs. The city could reduce expenditures by eliminating city departments that Orinda voters hold in low esteem.

In a city-sponsored survey of Orinda voters taken between January 22 and 25, 2012, respondents gave low ratings to the city's Planning Department and Department of Public Works. Regarding these two departments, only 8 percent and 16 percent of voters respectively gave these departments "strong approval." By contrast, the Orinda Library received a "strong approval" rating of 76 percent. The survey was conducted by the FM3 company in Oakland.

The Orinda City Council should also examine the costs associated with Orinda's participation in the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. Setting up an Orinda-only fire district could, according to some estimates, generate \$2 million a year extra for Orinda.

If Orinda finds that it really does need to raise taxes, the city should consider a parcel (property) tax. The January survey showed that 72 percent of Orinda's voters would be "very willing" or "somewhat willing" to pay between \$80 and \$100 per year to fix the roads. The figure of 72 percent is significant because passing a parcel tax requires a two-thirds (67 percent) vote.

At its January 31 meeting, the Orinda City Council indicated a preference for raising the city's sales tax, which is currently 8.25 percent.

Increasing the sales tax would be a huge mistake because Orindans might decide to abandon the city's stores for lower-tax venues like Walnut Creek. If shoppers went elsewhere, jobs in Orinda could be lost. Killing jobs during a hard economic times would be cruel.

If Orinda does need to raise taxes, the city should consider a \$59 annual parcel tax for a period of two years. A tax of \$59 should be acceptable to two-thirds of the city's voters. If Orinda did a good job repairing its roads, the city could ask for another \$59 tax at a later time.

Richard S. Colman
Orinda

Editor

Non Profit for Roads

The people of Orinda express concern about the deteriorating roads but do not want to pay extra property taxes or sales taxes. My suggestion is to start a 501C3 charitable non profit organization for road maintenance that would solicit funds all of which would go directly to the repair of deteriorating Orinda roads.

Each donation would be tax deductible. What this does is it allows us to give freely and not be forced to do so. The people who are so very upset can give as generously as their hearts desire.

With this approach the people of Orinda have a direct hand in the road repair. If we do not freely contribute our roads deteriorate and we can blame ourselves. I believe the people of Orinda are generous. If 10,000 people gave \$100 each that would be 1 million, \$200, 2 million, \$500, 5 million. Do that every year and our roads would be repaired. The main point is that people are very leary about the City, County, and State stealing money earmarked for roads. This approach eliminates these fears. What do you say Orinda?

Gerhard Perry
Orinda

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[back](#)

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