

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, July 3, 7:00 pm Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, June 26, at 7:00 pm Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Historical Landmark Committee

Tuesday, June 26, 3:00 pm Gallery Room, Library 26 Orinda Way

School Board Meeting Orinda Union School District

Monday, June 25, 6:00 pm **OUSD Office** 8 Altarinda Road, Orinda www.orindaschools.org See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce: www.orindachamber.org

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East Bay Sales Tax Increases – Ill Wind or Candles in the Darkness?

By Laurie Snyder

DRE# r00445794, DRE# 01181995

Tune 5, 2012. An exhausting Primary Election Day on which the Orinda City Council heard from staff about ongoing budget problems during a 5:30 p.m. workshop, and then at a meeting that ran from 7 to 11 p.m., from residents unhappy with the Planning Commission's handling of its Lavenida Lane subdivision review and from residents for and against a potential sales tax hike.

On June 6, Council members awoke to the news that voters across Contra Costa County passed a passel of parcel, parks, and sales taxes. Those successes, despite very low voter turnout, may turn out to be small candles which guide Orinda toward an eventual exit from its own fiscal

Crocket and Port Costa squeaked out the two-thirds needed to pass a parks and recreation tax. Hercules, San Pablo, and Pittsburg each asked would end quickly, and were all rewarded by voters with their confidence.

In San Pablo and Pittsburg, the half-cent taxes will decrease after five years to a quarter-cent, and then sunset completely after another five

At the Council meeting, resident cial sources "pitiful." She advocated

Richard Colman described the City's potential tax hike as "an attack on senior citizens with limited incomes" and urged the Council to reconsider, saying any increase in the sales tax would backfire by driving Orinda's business customers elsewhere. He suggested that the Council try instead for a parcel or property tax and pointed to page 33 of the City's recent Voter Survey, which appears to show residents' support for these options.

Alex Evans, chair of the City's Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Committee (CIOC), advised Council members that they would need to decide on both the amount and duration of the tax hike. "We think a half-cent is more prudent at this time," he said, noting that a 20-year sunset is typical for roads measures, but may be too long to be palatable for Orinda resi-

Carol Penskar, chair of the City's for half-cent sales tax increases that Finance Advisory Committee, took issue with comments by other residents regarding the revenues likely to be generated. "Six hundred thousand dollars is a lot more than it seems," she said. Penskar also recalled her surprise when reviewing Orinda's commercial property tax figures, terming Orinda's take from commer-

for the City to develop a plan for the downtown to reverse this trend.

In deliberating the potential sales tax increase, each Council member came down in favor of adding a sunset clause with the majority feeling that three to five years would be too short. Council Member Dean Orr indicated that he would not oppose a sunset clause, expressing his wish to see a term of roughly 15 years, while Victoria Smith felt 15 years would be too long for residents and suggested a sunset of 10 years.

Council Member Sue Severson reminded residents that delaying only makes things worse, drawing the conclusion that one dollar spent today would cost the City five if spent down the road. "I think we need to have a long enough time to see progress," she said, explaining that the City should factor in the time it takes to plan, solicit bidders, execute, and then evaluate projects. Stating a preference for 15 to 20 years, she wants to see a minimum 10-year sunset.

Noting that Measure J has a sunset of 20 years, Vice Mayor Worth advised her colleagues that the period for this proposed sales tax measure would not need to be as long. Mayor Steve Glazer suggested that Council members could begin with a sales tax

with sunset before moving on to a parcel or property tax.

The Council approved placement of the proposed sales tax increase on the November ballot. Staff will bring a revised plan with a specific sunset back to the Council no later than July 19.

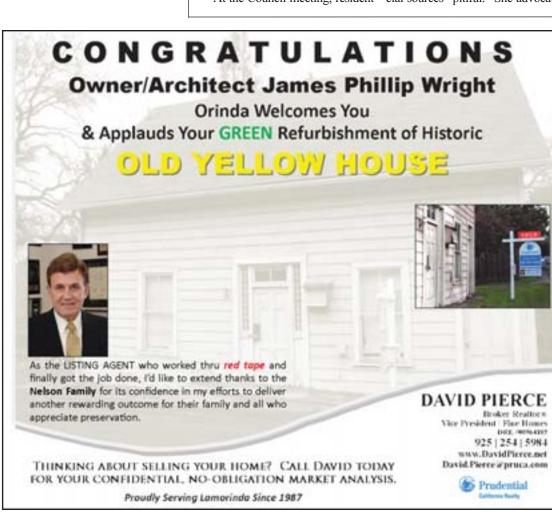
How Much Does It Cost?

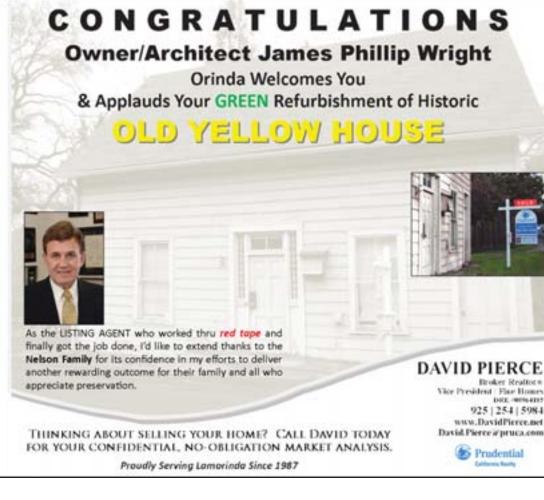
November contested consolidated elections historically cost the City of Orinda between \$30,000 to \$35,000.

The cost to the City for statements on election materials describing each candidate is typically \$400 per candidate for 250 words – but doubles when candidate descriptions are increased to 400 words or carry over to a second page.

Candidates vying for office pay the City to print and distribute these statements by providing deposits at the time they file their nomination papers.

Source: Orinda City Council Meeting, June 5, Staff Report for Agenda Item G-4.







workshop – this time prior to the regularly scheduled Council meeting on

The latest projections still reflect one percent declines in property taxes of \$182,773 and in lieu of vehicle license fees of \$73,642, along with estimated losses of \$9,000 and \$45,000 due to pending property tax appeals

With an improved picture from Comcast and PG&E, however, the estimated Franchise Fee and Property Transfer Tax decline will likely now only be \$22,395. This dip is due to Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority fees coming in at only 0.04 percent of what was originally anticipated in initial budget projections.

With the "To Solve" pared down to \$124,626, staff recommended the following changes for the Council's consideration:

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