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### **Council Mulls Road Funding Options and Directs Voter Poll**

**By Victor Ryerson** 

option to place before voters. There is no escaping the fact that increase in taxes, and the council is trying to determine how residents are most inclined to take by another FAC member, Chairtheir medicine.

The issue of what standard to achieve was settled by the council Nov. 17, when it considered road repair alternatives proposed by the Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Committee. Choosing the alternative that would require all roads in Orinda to meet a mini-(PCI) standard of 50, insuring good roads for the entire community, the council then referred the members' questions. matter to the Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) to identify funding options to accomplish that goal. Although it was not anticipated that the FAC would be able to report back to the council before January, it did so at the Dec. 15 meeting.

The FAC identified five poaccelerate the funding by issuing expected in February. a bond, or to adopt a pay-as-you

aced with the imminent need go approach with tax revenues. to move Orinda's road re- The possible sources of new pairs and maintenance forward to funding identified by the FAC incompletion in a timely manner, clude sales tax, parcel tax, ad valthe City Council has taken the orem tax, real estate transfer tax, next steps toward achieving that and utility tax. A combination of goal by reviewing five funding these could be used, but the voter options and authorizing a public approval requirement varies opinion poll to identify the best among them, making the decision complicated. One approach, enacting a real estate transfer tax, finishing the work will require an would require Orinda to become a charter city.

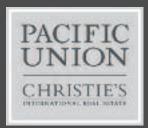
Repeating a comment made man Bob Thompson told the council that the various options "all gore someone's ox, and the oxen are different for different people." He emphasized the need for significant public outreach and discussion, so that voters will understand the need for a tax and the attendant consequences. FAC mum Pavement Condition Index member Bob Burt fleshed out the pros and cons of each for the council, and answered the council

Discussion of the issue segued into the matter of public outreach when the council authorized city staff to contract with a public opinion polling firm to conduct a poll regarding infrastructure funding options, as well as satisfaction with city services generally. Because tight election tential funding sources, as well as deadlines must be met, in order to the estimated tax rates and the avoid delaying the road repairs, pros and cons associated with the survey questions will be preeach. Closely associated with the sented to the council at its Jan. 12 choice is the decision whether to meeting. The survey results are

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### Clearance a Necessity on Lamorinda Roads

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Photo courtesy Moraga-Orinda Fire District

She noted that the vegetation canopy over the roadway caused problems for evacuation at the Valley Fire. Plus the fact that the fire burned utility poles, leaving no cell coverage, no Internet access, and people couldn't receive the message to evac-pleted by the beginning of the fire uate. Potential for such a disaster exists in the private enclaves of Leonard. "In the winter, you don't Lamorinda.

The unkempt vegetation also can damage the district apparatus. "But it's not about our equipment," said Leonard. "The engines will get there, bring dire consequences. regardless of the challenge, even if it means damaging the equipment. It's miles an hour. A lot of people can't the delay in response."

and Trent Willis drove a Ford F-250 tion." along a narrow Orinda private road,

and pointed out a recent accident scene. An overhanging branch from a large tree impeded an MOFD engine, and as the engine tried to avoid trash cans on the side of the road, it wrecked into the tree.

"It's not about us trying to be difficult," said Willis, as he crept through North Road in Orinda, another spot the utility vehicle - let alone a fire engine - had trouble navigating. He repeated Leonards's words nearly verbatim, pounding home a consistent message. "The firefighters will risk injury, they'll rip the lights off the engine to get through, they'll do whatever they have to do to get there," he said. "It's all about the delay."

City manager Janet Keeter confirmed that Orinda has no jurisdiction over maintenance of private roads. Leonard said she hopes the maintenance efforts will be governed by common sense.

"We'd like to see this work comseason, by early next spring," said have to worry about sparks causing fires, or worry about the low humidity. Now is the time to do it."

She fears that not doing it could

"The Valley Fire burned at six run that fast," said Leonard. "If we Fire inspectors Kristian Balfour don't act, we'll be in the same situa-

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