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Residents on private roads hit with second tax benefiting only public road residents

By Sora O'Doherty

Many residents who live on Orinda's private roads came to the Dec. 19 city council meeting to ask the council not to approve the Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Commission report until the council had resolved the issue of private roads. They succeeded to the extent that the council postponed approval of the report, but at the same meeting the

council adopted an additional fee to be added to refuse collection bills that will go toward repairing the damage that garbage trucks do to public roads. Although all residents will pay the fee, which Council Member Dean Orr acknowledged is definitely a tax, and although all roads will be equally damaged by the large, heavy vehicles, only public roads

will benefit.

Some 23 percent of Orinda's roads are private. Vice Mayor Inga Miller asked that approval of the CIOC report, which was highly praised by the council and by Orr in particular, be postponed for a short while to allow the addition of some history of private roads in Orinda.

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Orinda marks passing of former mayor with moment of silence

By Sora O'Doherty



Former Orinda Mayor Greg Wheatland Photo provided

Former Orinda Mayor Greg Wheatland died Sunday, Dec. 17, after a brief illness. His passing was marked by the City Council with a moment of silence in his honor at the conclusion of its Dec. 19 meeting.

Wheatland served on the city council for three full terms, serving as mayor twice between 1992 and 2004. Wheatland was an attorney, a partner at Ellison, Schneider and Harris LLP.

According to Laura Abrams, who served on the city council with Wheatland for 10 years, he died after a brief illness and his wife, Shirley, an Orinda native, and his daughter Tara, an attorney in Alaska, were at his side. The Wheatlands met when both were attending UC Santa Cruz. Wheatland later earned his law degree at UC Davis. In addition to his career as an attorney, Wheatland served as a public utility judge.

Abrams described Wheatland as a very private person, but a brilliant person. "I served on a pretty smart council, high IQs," Abrams said, "but Gregg stood out.

"He had amazing ability as a legislator," Abrams said. "He was an enormous resource, a fierce environmentalist, a real superhero." Abrams considered Wheatland not just a colleague but a friend and praised him as very kind and generous, a person who would step up and offer his tremendous

skills to help you. He always had an answer, Abrams added, as well as unimpeachable integrity. "He was one of a kind," she concluded.

Wheatland and Joyce Hawkins negotiated the compromise that built Gateway Valley (now Wilder) and obtained \$10 million that the city received years before groundbreaking and used to build the gymnasium at Wagner Ranch Elementary School, remodel the community center and build the city offices and the library. Mayor Amy Worth used the moment of silence to remember Wheatland for the gifts he gave to the Orinda community, which will continue to be enjoyed by future generations.

Former Orinda City Manager Bill Lindsay remembered that he really enjoyed working with Wheatland, who cared so much about the Orinda community. "He was very creative at looking at issues and coming up with solutions to problems, and I learned a lot from him," Lindsay said, adding that he was part of a wonderful team of council members during Lindsay's tenure.

In a resolution that marked the conclusion of his time on the city council, Wheatland was credited with turning around public opinion on Wilder and establishing a paramedic program for the community. He was also cited for improving the city's solid waste programs, and Contra Costa County's transit systems through his leadership on joint powers agencies.

The resolution stated that Wheatland had a particular passion for customer service, and helped initiate programs in the city's organization that would more effectively reach out to the community and that his positive impact on quality of life in Orinda and in Contra Costa County would be a legacy well beyond his 12 years on the council.

The family plans to hold a memorial on the afternoon of Jan. 13 at the Orinda Community Center.

Better Business Bureau aims to help seniors avoid scams

By Sora O'Doherty



Pearl Yon of the Better Business Bureau speaks to seniors Dec. 13 at the Orinda Library. Photo Sora O'Doherty

Telephone, mail and online scams have become more prevalent over the years, with more seniors falling prey to the devious tricks of the trade each year. Pearl Yon, communication specialist of the Better Business Bureau, offered advice about what scammers do, and what seniors can do to stop it during a Dec. 13 seminar at the Orinda Library.

Yon said to never answer yes to any questions on the telephone, as scammers can record your "yes" and use it as proof that you agreed to their scam. She also told her audience that scammers can make any number appear on your caller ID; they can fake any number, be it your son's or daughter's or the real number of the IRS. But, she noted, the IRS does not conduct business over the phone, so they would never be calling you directly.

There are various other common scams Yon says seniors often fall prey. In the lottery or sweepstakes scam, you might receive a check and a letter saying that you have won a large sum of money. The letter goes on to say that you need to deposit the check and wire funds to cover fees, insurance and taxes. The check will be counterfeit and any money sent will be lost. In the medical alert scam, you might be notified that you are eligible to receive a free medical alert system, and all you have to do is recommend the product to a friend. Despite being told that everything is paid for, the recipient finds later that they have been registered for a service with fees of up to \$400 per year. In the grandparent scam, people receive calls from someone claiming that they have your grandchild, who is in trouble in a different state and needs you to wire money for bail or damages. Victims of this scam have lost thousands of dollars.

The Better Business Bureau advises that if something sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true. Don't wire money to anyone who tells you that you have to send money to collect a prize. If you get a call from a medical alert company, don't press any buttons on your phone and hang up immediately. Contact your grandchild or your children to assure that they are safe; do not wire funds. If in doubt, you can call the BBB for advice.

Yon noted that she hoped she wasn't just addressing the people

in her audience, but that each of them would spread the word on how to avoid scams. The top "red flags" for seniors are: receiving a phone call asking for your personal information, bank account, credit card numbers, or Medicare ID number; receiving a check with a letter stating that you have won a prize; door-to-door sales offering discounts on products or services, magazine subscriptions, or home alarm installation; being asked to wire money or return an overpayment; finding unexpected charges to your bank account or credit card; receiving an email from a financial institution asking you to update your account information; high-pressure, emotional requests from a charity with a name that sounds similar to a recognized charity; invitations to estate planning seminars; and calls from someone claiming to be your grandchild asking you to wire money.

The BBB urges seniors to register their telephone number with the National Do-Not-Call Registry at 1-888-382-1222, to keep careful records of all transactions and shred documents before discarding them, to trust your instincts and, if in doubt, research a business at bbb.org prior to doing business with it. Seniors should also be on the alert for charities with names that sound like real, well-know organizations. You can check out charities with the BBB's Wise Giving Alliance at bbb.org/charity.

Happy New Year!

We would like to thank all of our clients, friends, and fellow agents in our Wonderful LAMORINDA community for your trust during 2017. We wish you all joy, love, health and happiness in 2018.



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