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Letters to the editor

Reengaging with the world post pandemic

I know for the last year it has been hard to think beyond the borders of the United States. With Covid-19 ravaging our country, with the vaccine rollout starting the way that it did, it was hard to make space in our minds for the rest of the world, with occasional exceptions and pitiful glances at TV screens during the early days of the pandemic when countries like China and Italy were suffering what at the time we did not know was coming.

However, our light at the end of the tunnel is coming. That does not mean that everyone else's is. Now that we in the United States and the Bay Area are returning to sense of near normalcy, it is the time to reengage in the world. It is time to expand foreign aid, so that we can beat Covid-19 once and for all, and afterwards, build a stronger, safer, and more economically sound world. Please, call your representatives today. Tell them that you care about ending the pandemic, about ending global poverty, and that they have the power to help you do that. We are finishing strong. Let's help the world do the same.
Nina Naffziger
Moraga

Open letter to three MOFD Board members

Shame on you for suggesting that MOFD be merged with ConFire. Shame on you for not doing adequate fire prevention and fuel reduction for decades, leaving so much vegetation around us that we are now a high risk fire area. Shame on

you for not funding two year-round chipper crews. Shame on you for refusing to even spend \$17,000 for a chipper service over last summer despite public demand. You have a \$28 million budget. You can and must allocate more to fire prevention. It should not be the city of Orinda that pays for chipper service. That was your job all along. I do not accept your excuse that you may have been looking at cost savings. Yes ConFire may have been able to reduce cost by cutting services but we residents would still be paying the same taxes to ConFire. Our ambulance response time would increase, personnel reduced, and stations closed. All to the detriment of our cities.

The residents now know that you have failed to "protect and to serve". It has also now become apparent that your loyalties are to the union and not the community. I will do everything I can to remind our community of your actions until the next elections. Shame on you.
Charles Porges
Orinda

Orinda Unfair to the Handicapped

Orinda is unfair to the handicapped. In 2010 – eleven years ago – the City prepared a list of approximately 36 locations where wheelchair ramps should be installed. According to the Director of Public Works, one-third of those have not been installed. Orinda's stated policy is that such ramps will only be installed when legally required, such as in connection with a street repaving. Meanwhile, all sorts of other public improve-

ments that are not legally required are funded. Notably, Orinda has prioritized bike routes and their signage over wheelchair ramps. Orinda has prioritized countless consultants, including now a plethora of creek consultants whose contract price has grown faster than a virulent cancer. I have repeatedly brought the need to install wheelchair ramps to the at-

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ention of the Orinda Council, to TSAC, and to Public Works, to little or no avail. The City has even ignored my suggestion to do as San Jose and Los Angeles have done: seek a grant under TDA Article 3. Such ramps also incidentally benefit folks tem-

porarily required to use a wheelchair as a result of an injury, and folks pushing a stroller. Orinda's discrimination against those who cannot walk, let alone ride a bike, must end.
Nick Waranoff
Orinda

Additional work to be undertaken on San Pablo Creek restoration

... continued from Page A6

In public comments, Ted Fleischman applauded the city council for the work it is doing on San Pablo Creek. Revitalizing the creek will bring back wildlife, plant life, and make the downtown better, he said. Nick Waranoff also commented. He opined that the city staff would later come back to the council for even more money, and that the proposed work could subject the city to liability or inverse condemnation, and would likely increase the cost of flood insurance. He judged the proposed work to be "very unfair to neighboring landowners and the citizens of Orinda."

Council Member Inga Miller, one of the two members of the downtown development subcommittee, agreed that it was a large amount of money in a city where the council takes such pride in being frugal. But this is a good use of city funds, she concluded, to assure that downtown development cares for the creek. Some of the creek-related issues she addressed included recreational opportunities, alternative transportation, the stormwater drainage issue in the face of more severe weather events, including 100-year storms. "The creek is a major storm-water mover," she noted, "and we haven't paid attention to it." Other salient points Miller noted were that the director of public works is

also the Flood Plain director. The creek channel is up against a huge major road, and there are suggestions that the channel is breaking up. "This seems like win-win work," she concluded. The diligent work is needed for city infrastructure and, at the same time, the city is listening to our residents who want us to restore the creek. The other subcommittee member, Council Member Nick Kosla, stressed that he supported getting this work done so that everyone will have this standard.

Vice Mayor Dennis Fay noted that he was one of the council members who had questions at the March 16 meeting, but said that staff had done a good job of persuading him that the study will be useful, and it is important that we need to know. "Being an ostrich is not a good idea," he said. "We have sufficient funds, I'm prepared to move forward." Also prepared to move forward was Council Member Darlene Gee, who also had questions the last time the matter was before the council. But after the presentation, she agreed that there are multiple benefits of doing the additional work.

Mayor Amy Worth thanked city manager David Biggs for the reminder of the city's upcoming responsibilities of storm water management. "We are a watershed," Worth said; "water comes down and into the creeks." The matter passed unanimously.

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