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Orinda council approves mid-cycle budget, CIP, and grant to Friends of Orinda's Creeks

By Sora O'Doherty



Photo provided

There may have been a little confusion, but the end result was that the Orinda City Council on June 21 agreed to allocate \$50,742 from its general fund to complete the funds required by the Friends of Orinda Creeks to restore a portion of San Pablo Creek directly behind the Vintage Office Building. The allocation came during the city council's adoption of its mid-cycle budget and capital improvement projects.

The source of the confusion was that Assembly Member Rebecca Bauer-Kahan has secured an allocation of \$125,000 from the California state budget to begin work on the San Pablo Creek Pedestrian Trail and Restoration Design Project. Although there was a ceremony in which Bauer-Kahan presented then Mayor Amy Worth with an oversized check, in reality the funds have yet to actually come through to the city and, consequently, the city cannot know the exact terms attached to the allocation of funds. Nevertheless, the city is in full support of the restoration of the creek, and decided unanimously to make the allocation from its general fund reserves.

Friends of Orinda Creeks has already raised 67% of the total cost of the current project, which is phase one of the creek restoration. The total cost of this project is \$154,303, of which the Friends have raised \$101,561 from private donations and community groups. In a letter to the council, Friends President Bob Stoops and Vice-President Michael Bowen requested that the city allocate the remaining \$50,742. The city agreed to that request unanimously. The project will remove large, loose concrete slabs from the currently degraded creek bed and replace them with step pools created by 3-boulder weirs. The project, the first enhancement of San Pablo Creek downtown since it was channelized in 1958, will improve the aquatic habitat and aesthetics, allowing fish and other creek inhabitants easy passage. An improved creek-side trail will parallel the stream. A presentation about the project, scheduled to begin work on Aug. 1, can be viewed online at <https://restoresanpablocreek.org/>

phase-i-presentation.

In adopting the mid-cycle budget, the city council also adopted the revised Capital Improvements Plan, which includes some new projects. One project also affects San Pablo Creek in downtown Orinda. This project affects a 1,300 linear foot reinforced concrete culvert from the Safeway Parking lot to Orinda Way. The culvert is within a public drainage easement and is therefore a city facility that the city must maintain. The cost of the work will be spread over three fiscal years and will total nearly \$4 million, to be largely funded from Measure R Sales Tax revenues.

Other new projects include a new crosswalk on Moraga Way at Valley View, and raised crosswalks on Glorietta at Martha, both funded by grants. The 20-year-old elevator at Orinda Library will be modernized at a cost of \$320,000, funded by the library parcel tax. Grants will also pay for the replacement of generators at the Orinda Community Center and City Hall, and the addition of new generators for the library and maintenance yard, with the addition of solar battery back-ups. Retrofitting the lamps at the community park tennis courts with LED lights will improve efficiency and provide costs savings. The lamp retrofit will be funded by Orinda's field maintenance surcharge. Wilder fields one and two will also be retrofitted with LED lights, paid for by park dedication fees and the Wilder community maintenance endowment. The community center will also benefit from the replacement of existing carpets, installed in 1997, in the lobby, hallways, offices and rooms seven and eight.

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