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Orinda's only concern with new fire code is limitation on traffic calming

By Sora O'Doherty

City Manager David Biggs presented the staff report on the 2023 proposed fire code update to the Orinda City Council on Jan. 10. The matter was on for discussion only, but the new fire code will be up for the first reading of the proposed ordinance at the Jan. 18 Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board meeting.

Biggs noted that the only proposed amendment which may be of concern to the council is the provision which proposes to limit certain physical traffic calming devices/improvements in the Very High Fire Severity Zone or in neighborhoods with a single access point. He added that the town of Moraga has similar concerns.

City staff have been in discussion with Fire Chief David Winnacker on the traffic calming issue, and he has stated in correspondence to the city that "should the city of Orinda be concerned regarding the inclusion of the amendments clarifying the manner in which traffic calming devices and roadway obstructions are reviewed, MOFD does not object to withdrawing this amendment."

There was no public comment on the item, which was heard very late in the meeting after 11:30 p.m. In council discussion, Vice Mayor Darlene Gee said that she really didn't see anything too problematic with the new code, except the issue of the city having flexibility on traffic calming measures.??Gee, who is professionally a transportation engineer, added that she could not understand why physical traffic calming measures would be an issue for fire equipment.??

Mayor Inga Miller agreed that traffic calming measures are really important to create safe driving conditions within the city. She said that she hoped the fire chief will come around on that, and hoped that the fire district will see the wisdom of having traffic calming measures on the city's streets.

Biggs promised to convey the council's thought to the fire district.

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