



The I C O N

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Big Money May Have Influenced City-Council Race

By Richard Colman

Relatively huge amounts of money were spent by the winners of Orinda's city-council race.

The winners, Darlene Gee and Inga Miller, spent, according to September 2016 and October 2016 reports released by the Orinda City Clerk's office, more than twice as much as their opponents: Bruce London and Linda Delehunt.

Total candidate spending between the beginning Jan. 1, 2016, to Oct. 22, 2016, was \$37,965,

In percentage terms, 69 percent of the total city-council monetary contributions went to Miller and Gee. For London and Delehunt, the percentage was 31 percent.

Five entities received campaign contributions. They and the dollar amounts received by each entity are below.

(1) Orindans for a Better Downtown, Gee and Miller for Orinda City Council 2016	\$5,969
(2) Inga Miller	\$11,184
(3) Darlene Gee	\$8,928
TOTAL	\$26,121 (69%)
(4) Bruce London	\$8,139
(5) Linda Delehunt	\$3,705
TOTAL	\$11,844 (31%)

Technically, London and Delehunt did not run as a team. But their positions on major issues were very similar.

The vote totals, with 100 percent of the precincts reporting, were as follows for the November 8, 2016, election:

Inga Miller	3,911 votes	34.1%
Darlene Gee	3,490 votes	30.4%
Bruce London	2,388 votes	20.8%
Linda Delehunt	1,691 votes	14.7%

A review of Gee's campaign contributions reveals a potential conflict of interest. Gee is a vice president of the HNTB Corporation, an engineering and construction firm.

An examination of HNTB's website shows that the company has done work for BART.

In an Oct. 19, 2016, letter to the editor of the Lamorinda Weekly, Gee wrote: "None of my campaign contributions are from development interests."

On Sept. 6, 2016, the HNTB Holdings PAC (political action committee) in Kansas City, Missouri, gave Gee's campaign \$1,000.

From her fellow HNTB employees, Ms. Gee received seven contributions. Six of the seven contributions came from HNTB employees who live outside of Orinda. Here are the names, locations, and dollar amounts donated by these seven employees: Anthony Lee (Cranford, NJ, \$99); Dina Potter (Piedmont, CA, \$500); Joshua Englander (Sherman Oaks, CA, \$100); Shannon Gaffney (Moraga, CA, \$100); Jeff Watson (Novato, CA \$100); Maureen Hayes (Ladera Ranch, CA, \$100) and Darrell Vice (Orinda, CA, \$250).

Gee also received \$200 from Grace Crunican of Alameda, CA. Crunican is the general manager of BART.

According to well informed sources, a complaint about Gee has been filed with the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC).

According to FPPC's website; "Public service is a public trust, requiring officials and employees to place loyalty to the citizens, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain. Following ethical guidelines and eliminating any improprieties, or even the appearance of potential corruption, is imperative to safeguarding the public's trust in

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Celebrate the Brain

By Dr. Laura Pawlak

Thanksgiving and the many holidays that follow are joyful times to be with family and friends. Holiday cheer, a positive emotion, can also provide the brain with healthful hormones and neurochemicals that improve brain function.

Family traditions boost enjoyment of holiday gatherings. In a recent series of studies in the Journal of the Association for Consumer Research, subjects described the customs they followed -- along with those of their families -- during holidays. These activities were rated as enjoyable, personal experiences that enhanced bondings with family members. In fact, simply recalling past traditions can put a warm glow on holiday gatherings and support creative thinking.

Memories of childhood or lost loved ones often surface at celebrations. The bittersweet feeling of nostalgia can elevate mood and mental outlook. A recent study published in the journal, Emotion, reported that nostalgia boosts a sense of connection to the past, creating a social web that extends



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The Icon is a periodic publication that covers news about Orinda as well as health-related matters.

Orinda is For Sale; High School is Overcrowded

By Richard Colman

Piece by piece, the Orinda City Council has been approving the selling off of valuable land in the city.

Powerful vested interests, using large sums of money, are destroying the semi-rural, village-like environment of Orinda's cherished surroundings.

New development is contributing to school overcrowding.

Miramonte High School in Orinda is experiencing excessive enrollment. The current school year has forced Miramonte teachers to share classrooms. The *Mirador*, the school's newspaper, reported on September 30, 2016, that "... the student population has increased by 25 students this year. That's enough students to fill another classroom."



Orinda's Housing Element allows new construction on existing residential property.

Excessive overbuilding is leading to overcrowded schools and intolerable traffic and parking problems.

On some workdays, the driving time on Camino Pablo between the Orinda BART station and Miner Road can be as much 30 minutes between 5:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.

Usually, the BART parking lot in Orinda is full by 7:30 A.M. on workdays.

About six years ago, the city council approved the Monteverde/Eden Housing project located at 2 Irwin Way, across the street from the Orinda Way Firehouse. Monteverde not only violated Orinda's 35-foot height limit, but the structure blocks residents' views of nearby hills. Monteverde has 67 residential units and 30 parking spaces.

Eden Housing, located in Hayward, California, had \$103 million in net assets and an annual income \$20 million in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015. These figures come from Eden's federal tax return. Eden's president, Linda Mandolini, earned \$252,000 in the same fiscal year.

Eden is a nonprofit organization. With assets and income at such high levels, the question can be asked: Why isn't Eden a for-profit organization instead of a nonprofit, tax-exempt entity?

Ground-breaking at Monteverde took place on Jan. 25, 2013. After the building's completion, Woody Karp of Eden presented the Orinda City Council with a gift.

In 2005, Pulte Homes Inc. applied to build high-density housing near ball fields on Altarinda Road. The result, visible today, is 73 homes squeezed into 11 acres. Expressed another way, the Pulte project has 6.6 homes per acre. The homes are so close together that a tall person can touch two adjacent structures by fully extending his arms. The development is called Orinda Grove.

But Orinda is not done with development.

On October 18, the city council asked the city's staff to come back with proposals -- for downtown development -- by working with the Urban Land Institute (ULI). City-

council member Phillips voted against the plan, which would cost the city \$15,000.

ULI is a nonprofit organization. However, a review of ULI's federal tax return for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2015, shows that the organization had \$50.6 million in net assets and a profit of \$7.6 million. The head of ULI had, for the same fiscal year, an annual salary of \$700,000, a salary higher than that of the president of the United States.

There have been other assaults on Orinda's environment.

On July 18, 2013, at a joint meeting of the directors of MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) and ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments), the directors approved Plan Bay Area, a scheme that could lead to the construction of high-rise, high-density housing in Orinda and other cities. At the time of the July 2013 meeting, Worth of the Orinda City Council was also the chairperson of MTC, a position to which she was not elected by voters.

In 2015, the Orinda City Council approved a Fifth Cycle (version) of the Housing Element, a plan to add hundreds of new homes to Orinda, a city that is basically full. Previous versions of the Housing Element also required the addition of hundreds of new homes.

The Housing Element is mandated by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). HCD is run by unelected bureaucrats.

In December 2014, city-council member Phillips moved, at a city-council meeting, to discuss the Fifth Cycle of the Housing Element. Voting against Phillips' motion were council members Worth and Victoria Smith. However, Phillips' motion passed with the support of council-members Glazer, Orr, and Phillips herself.

In January 2015, Phillips, at another city-council meeting, moved to have a city-wide vote on the Housing Element. Phillips' motion was not seconded, killing it. Present at the January 2015 meeting were council members Glazer, Orr, Smith, and Phillips. Worth was absent.

If one wants to go back about two decades, there is what is currently called the Wilder Project. South of Highway 24 on the Orinda side of the Caldecott Tun-



Houses are squeezed closely together at the Orinda Grove project on Altarinda Road in Orinda.

Celebrate the Brain

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across people and time. This "self-continuity" energizes the brain. So, pull out an old photo album and spend some time revisiting your past this season.

When listing New Year's resolutions, resolve to keep friendships alive throughout the year. The benefits of supportive relationships are numerous. Research published online in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* (2016), stated that individuals who have greater levels of social support enjoy better psychological health and mental functioning. The reduction of chronic stress and the stimulation associated with meaningful social interaction are strongly linked to improved resilience and reduced risk of anxiety and depression. There is also a lower likelihood of cognitive decline.

The highlight of any holiday is food, often deeply entwined with tradition, but possibly devoid of brain-healthy choices. Compromises that allow both brain-healthy and traditionally-happy fare, including deserts, can solve this dilemma. First, shift the spotlight from rich food to lighter fare by serving salad as the first course. Go heavy on the greens, colored veggies, and crunchy bits of apples or pears. Second, make a healthy vegetable side dish the co-star of the main course. Third, regarding the turkey, think outside the bread



box with offerings such as wild-rice stuffing, augmented with vegetables and dried cranberries. Lastly, the first bite of dessert, thoughtfully consumed, always gets rated as the best. Enjoy the fabulous taste of that bite! Then, empower your mind with oxygen -- by taking a mindful walk -- to complete the celebration of your brain.

Dr. Laura Pawlak (Ph.D., R.D. emerita) is a world-renown biochemist and dietitian emerita. She is the author of many scientific publications and has written such best-selling books as "The Hungry Brain," "Life Without Diets," and "Stop Gaining Weight." On the subjects of nutrition and brain science, she gives talks internationally. ■

ICON

EDITORIAL: Local Control is Vital

Doomed may be the best way to describe local control in Orinda and other California cities.

For years, government forces in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. have been usurping power from local communities.

Local control in Orinda is in such jeopardy that city-council member (and the city's mayor for most

of 2016) Victoria Smith, on May 26, 2016, wrote two members of the California State Legislature stating: "The City of Orinda opposes the recently-released proposal by the Governor [Jerry Brown] to pre-empt local discretionary land use approvals of specified housing developments. . ." Smith's letter went on to say: "Like other residents of California, the citizens of Orinda expect to be part of an open and transparent process in shaping the community."

On June 2, 2016, the Los Angeles Times reported that the governor "wants to wipe away local and state rules on parking, height, density, and environmental reviews beyond those already required through zoning."

On September 27, 2016, Gov. Brown signed Senate Bill 1069, allowing so-called "granny units" to be built on a homeowner's property.

Granny units, sometimes called Second Units, will allow a homeowner to construct extra housing on his property without review by local government. Second Units can be unobtrusive, but they can also result in the installation of tenants who play loud music, park vehicles (like motorcycles) in quiet neighborhoods, or have noisy parties. Has anyone thought about the law-enforcement costs associated with Second Units? Also, can local schools, in communities like Orinda, accommodate any extra pupils who live in Second Units?

In 1968, the federal government passed the Fair Housing Act, which prevents discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of property. This law must be upheld.

However, a local community has a right to develop community standards. For example, should a local community ally-



Orinda's Housing Element allows current residential properties to be subdivided into "granny units."

low someone to put up a 50-foot high, flashing neon sign saying, "Harry lives here?"

Unelected, unaccountable governmental bureaucrats are threatening the harmony and semi-rural character of Orinda. In 2015, the Orinda City Council, being threatened with the cutoff of road-repair funds coming from the State of California, passed what is called the Fifth Cycle (version) of the Housing Element, a plan forcing Orinda, a city which is full, to add hundreds of new homes.

Orindans pay taxes. Orindans should ask themselves what are they getting for their money. Orindans should demand that their city council stand up to external bureaucratic rule. Now is the time for the city council to show courage. ■

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government. To help accomplish this goal, laws exist to aid public officials in avoiding conflicts between an official's public duties and the official's personal interests."

In the Nov. 8, 2016, election, Gee supported Measure X. The measure, which voters defeated, would have authorized, for transportation purposes, a half-cent increase in the sales tax in Contra Costa County. HNTB Holdings of Kansas City, Missouri, contributed \$20,000 to the Yes on Measure X campaign. Some of the Measure X money would have gone to BART.

Measure X, which needed a 67 percent vote to pass, received 62.5 percent of the total vote. Thus, the measure failed.

A review of Miller's campaign contributions shows that much of her money came from Miller herself. She also received contributions from politically prominent Orindans.

According to the city clerk's reports, no money from outside Orinda went to London or Delehunt.

Disclosure: This reporter contributed funds to Bruce London's campaign. ■



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nel, Wilder is building homes on 1,600 acres. About 250 homes are planned. Home prices range from \$1.5 to \$3.0 million. Critics of Wilder criticize the development, calling it a "moon-escape."

On June 1, 2016, the Lamorinda Weekly reported that a Wilder resident claimed that ". . . Wilder now has the highest rate of crime in Orinda."

Orinda's continued development is taking place after a four-year drought occurred between 2011 and 2015. During the drought, the East Bay Municipal Utility District, Orinda's water company, imposed a daily ration of 1,000 gallons per day on each Orinda residence. Households exceeding the limit were fined.

In November 2015, the city council opened up Orinda's water situation to discussion. There was a resident's request for examining Orinda's water use over the previous 10 years. The city council refused to act.

Orinda residents should not be surprised if their city, at some future time, looks more like Tokyo or New York City than the way it looked 20 years ago. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT:

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