



Big Money Influences Orinda City Council Races

By Richard Colman

Mountains of cash helped influence the results of the November 2018 races for the Orinda City Council.

For the city-council races, the table below shows how much money each candidate received between September 23, 2018, and October 20, 2018.

CANDIDATE	MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS
Worth, Amy	\$30,083
Kosla, Nick	\$14,325
Fay, Dennis	\$5,936
Jenkins, Kathleen	\$4,924
Phillips, Eve	\$2,801
Oridans for a Better Downtown (money for Worth, Kosla & Fay)	\$3,799

Source: Office of the city clerk of Orinda

The election may mean the return of Orinda's traditional oligarchs to policy-making by the city council.

Five candidates ran for three city council seats. The winners were Amy Worth, Dennis Fay, and Nick Kosla. The losers were Eve Phillips and Kathleen Jenkins.

Over the last 15 or so years, the oligarchs have favored development of high-rise, high-density housing and the expansion of commercial real estate.

Over \$50,000 in campaign contributions went to the winners of the November 2018 of the city-council race: Ms. Worth; Mr. Fay; and Mr. Kosla. Ms. Worth is an incumbent

city-council member.

The losers, Ms. Phillips and Ms. Jenkins, received about \$8,000. Ms. Phillips was elected to the city council in 2014.

In addition to receiving money, the council winners had the backing of Orinda's highly influ-

ential power brokers, such as Steve Glazer (D-Orinda) a former member of the Orinda City Council and now a state senator representing Orinda and nearby cities in the California State Senate.

The outcome of the 2018 city-council election is likely to change the look of Orinda. All three winners (Ms. Worth, Mr. Fay, and Mr. Kosla) support development of downtown Orinda and possibly other parts of the city.

During the 2018 city-council campaign, Messrs. Fay and Kosla refused repeated attempts to respond to special questions posed by The Icon. Specifically, The Icon asked these candidates for their views on land use in Orinda. The Icon also asked them if they favored limits on taxation and government spending in Orinda.

Ms. Worth did state, at the Oct. 3, 2018, Orinda Candidates Forum, that she favored local control, not State of California control, over the use of Orinda's land. However, Ms. Worth, who has served on the city council continually since December 1998, has supported various real-estate developments in the city.

Ms. Worth also serves on the boards of directors of three regional governmental agencies: MTC (Metropolitan Transpor-

See Big Money on page 2

The Holidays: A Time for Comfort Food

By Dr. Laura Pawlak

The term comfort food can be traced back to 1966, when the Palm Beach Post used the term in a story: "Adults, when under severe emotional stress, turn to what could be called 'comfort foods.' These foods are associated with the security of childhood, the relief of stress, and euphoric feelings."

Although the identification of particular items as comfort foods may be unique to an individual, patterns are detectable. In a study of American food choices, males preferred warm, hearty, meal-related comfort foods, such as steak, casseroles, and soup. Females consumed snacks as comfort foods, such as chocolate chip cookies and ice cream. Young or middle-age people, under 55 years of age, overwhelmingly



Eating fruits and vegetables the day before a feast can help limit over-eating during a holiday meal.

chose snack-related, comfort foods.

As the holidays approach, families and friends gather to share an array of comfort foods that provide nostalgic or cultural value. These foods are often characterized by their high caloric nature, rich in (1) carbohy-

See The Holidays on page 3

Where is Local Control?

Continued from page 2

Cities are not blame-free. Some have approved massive commercial construction without encouraging adequate housing. Instead of tackling their own workforce-housing balance, some cities expect nearby communities to house their 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. commuters.

The crisis we face is the systematic effort to dismantle local control and replace it with unelected, regional bureaucracies.

At the state level, there is a rush to pass more draconian legislation, like the dozen or so housing bills passed in 2018, piled on top of the 14 housing bills passed in 2017.

The crisis is believing the mantra "we have to do something." The crisis produces legislation that benefits a few, while jeopardizing the majority.

The crisis results in legislation that increases the financial burden on cities without calling it what it is -- an unfunded mandate.

The crisis is a threat to democracy.

Susan Kirsch is the founder of Livable California, a coalition designed to build bridges among local elected officials, volunteer leaders, and Sacramento legislators. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Icon is a periodic publication designed to inform Orinda residents about important issues in their community.

The Icon has no political affiliation and is non-partisan. The Icon is available by regular mail and over the internet. <www.iconnews.org>

The Icon is owned by Icon Publishing, LLC, which is located in Concord, California.

The editor and publisher of The Icon is Richard Colman, a resident of Orinda since 1999.

CONTACTING THE ICON:

The Icon can be contacted at:

The Icon
21-C Orinda Way, #248
Orinda, CA 94563
TEL (925) 609-2820 ext. 203
FAX (925) 363-7798

E-mail: info@iconnews.org
Website: www.iconnews.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

The Icon welcomes letters to the editor. Please submit letters to <info@iconnews.org>. FAX (925) 363-7798.

Big Money Influnces Orinda City Council Races

Continued from page 1

tation Commission); CCTA (Contra Costa Transportation Authority); and Recycle Smart (Orinda's garbage-collection board). Recycle Smart is sometimes called the Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority.

Mr. Kosla has a history of involvement with real estate development. On December 11, 2015, the Bay Area News Group, which publishes the East Bay Times (formerly the Contra Costa Times), showed a photograph of Mr. Kosla giving a talk about a plan to build 53 homes in Walnut Creek's Tice Valley. The photograph's caption identifies Mr. Kosla as a "project spokesperson for Pulte Homes . . ."

Pulte Homes built the Orinda Grove development on Orinda's Altarinda Road. Orinda Grove squeezes 73 homes into 8.2 acres. Thus, on average, each home occupies 0.11 acre.

Ms. Worth's positions on land use appear to have changed in recent months. She used to be associated with pro-development positions and now supports a more balanced approach.

On April 28, 2010, the Lamorinda Weekly, quoted Ms. Worth as saying that a housing project in Orinda is " . . . an asset for Orinda." The project at 2 Irwin Way (across the street from the Orinda Way firehouse) is called Monteverde and was built by Eden Housing of Hayward, California. Monteverde violates Orinda's 35-foot height limit.

However in February 2018, Ms. Worth wrote a letter to the state legislature expressing opposition to Senate Bill 827, which, according to Ms. Worth, "...would exempt certain housing projects from locally developed and adopted height limitations, densities, parking requirements, and design review standards."

In June 2018, Ms. Worth wrote two more

letters to the state legislature. Each letter objected to Assembly Bill 2923, which became law in September 2018. Assembly Bill 2923 grants land-use authority to BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit). In each of her two letters, Ms. Worth wrote, "Land use authority is a primary responsibility of local government." She added, "Authorizing a transit agency to regulate density, height, and parking requirements transfers this essential function away for local government."

On October 10, 2018, Grace Crunican, BART's general manager, wrote Ms. Worth, stating, "BART aims to partner with local communities to build 20,000 new housing units at our stations by 2040 and to ensure that at least 35% are affordable." Ms. Crunican did not define "affordable."

The votes for each candidate are displayed below. The information is based on local press reports.

CANDIDATE	VOTE TOTAL	%	COMMENT
Worth, Amy	3,688	25.6%	Winner & Incumbent
Fay, Dennis	3,067	21.3%	Winner
Kosla, Nick	2,962	20.5%	Winner
Phillips, Eve	2,758	19.1%	Incumbent
Jenkins, Kathleen	1,944	13.5%	Non-Incumbent

Source: East Bay Times (Nov. 8, 2018)

No one knows what the new Orinda City Council will propose in terms of real-estate development. What is known is that more residences in Orinda will lead to overcrowded schools, more traffic congestion, difficulty in finding parking spaces downtown, and less open space.

Also uncertain, is what changes, if any, will be made to Orinda's current building-height limit, housing density (houses per acre), and zoning rules. ■

Where is Local Control?

By Susan Kirsch

Local control of land use in California is in jeopardy.

The State of California is usurping local communities' ability to handle matters relating to building heights, zoning, and housing density (houses per acre).

Livable California, a group formed in early 2018, is creating coalitions with like-minded community leaders, elected city officials, and partnerships with statewide organizations.

The goal that brings these people together is to strengthen local control, within a context of regional planning and funding driven by locally-identified problems and solutions.



Lack of local control in Orinda could mean the construction of high-rise, high-density buildings in the city.

Local control isn't perfect, but among everyday people bottom-up problem-solving is preferable to top-down state mandates. Local control has a greater capacity to shape solutions than the adversarial, stymied, one-size-fits-all approach currently advocated by big business and Sacramento.

Occasionally, local planning tools have been used inappropriately. But throwing out such tools does not justify the use of state mandates or regional governmental regulations.

In community hands, these tools rely on local planning departments and elected city councils to engage stakeholders, conduct public meetings, issue progress reports, and measure results. Local officials live in close proximity to their decisions and witness their consequences. State and regional bureaucrats are generally located in far away offices.

See Local Control on page 4 page 2

The Holidays: A Time for Comfort Food

Continued from page 1

drate and fat or (2) fat and salt.

Consuming energy-dense food awakens a group of brain structures wired together into a reward system. This brain circuitry elicits emotions based on the sensory experience of the food. Comfort foods trigger pleasurable feelings -- moments of joy.

The chemicals responsible for feeling good are two-fold: endorphins, (nature's opioids); and endocannabinoids, the feel-good chemicals found in marijuana. Sugary foods activate the release of endorphins. Pizza, cheese casseroles, and other fatty foods spur the production of endocannabinoids.

When fat and sugar are combined, as in desserts, an explosion of both endorphins and endocannabinoids floods the brain, causing elation beyond nature's offerings. The temptation to overeat may be overwhelming, especially when a fond memory is linked to the food.

Enjoying holiday celebrations, without consuming excessive amounts of comfort foods, requires forethought. A plan is helpful! For example, set aside the day before the event as a time to eat fewer calories. Drink water, coffee, and/or tea. Have two light meals -- perhaps a fruit salad and a green salad.

On the day of the celebration, eat a healthy breakfast and add a salad if you feel hungry before attending the festivity. At the party, take a deep breath between bites of your favorite foods. Notice the positive memories that surface as you eat slowly.

Lastly, don't take goodies home. Holiday gatherings are meaningful times with friends, not just food. Savor the season!

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 Free Fall in Orinda

The City of Orinda is facing decline.

Orinda, perhaps the nicest place anywhere to live, has gone from a community of 5,000 in 1960 to over 19,000 today. While Orinda's schools are still excellent, educational quality is likely to decline severely once more residences -- most likely high-rise, high-density residences -- are built and more pupils arrive in a city that has no more classroom space.

During the evening rush hour in Orinda, driving one mile from the city's BART station to Miner Road can take as much as 30 minutes. During daylight hours, finding a parking space in the theater district is generally impossible.

In early December 2018, the city council will have five members -- Amy Worth, Inga Miller, Darlene Gee, Dennis Fay, and Nick Kosla -- who traditionally have supported more real estate development although in recent months Ms. Worth has called for more local control, not more State of California control, over Orinda's land.

During the fall 2018 city-council campaign Mr. Fay and Mr. Kosla failed to respond to re-

peated inquiries to obtain their views on land use. Are both men being evasive? Perhaps that are afraid to tell the news media whether or not they support local control over the city's land. Mr. Kosla has a history of being involved in real estate development.

BART wants to build 20,000 housing units in local communities. BART has received this authorization from Assembly Bill 2923, which Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law in September 2018. BART is in the transportation business, not the real-estate business. What does BART know about housing? In fact, what does BART know about transportation? Crime and dirty cars have plagued BART passengers in recent years.

Orinda's homeowners may not be pleased to see the deterioration of their city.

Accordingly, a certain number of the city's residents may want to sell their homes now while home prices are at record levels. There is no guarantee that Orinda will avoid a future economic downturn or an exodus of people. Orindans might want to remember the financial crisis of 2008-2009.

For years, Orinda has been bedeviled by the Housing Element, a state mandate to construct more homes in Orinda, a city that is full. The most recent mandate called Cycle Five is demanding that the city build hundreds of new homes.

Then, there is the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), another state mandate for the construction of homes for individuals of various income levels. While all Americans must abide by the 1968 Fair Housing Act, which bars discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing,

no person has an automatic, right to live in Orinda or anywhere else. If a person wants to live in Orinda, he should make the necessary payment to purchase an Orinda home.

The new city council is obligated to show boldness by opposing State of California mandates concerning Orinda's land. In recent

times, city council members Eve Phillips and Ms. Worth have shown the necessary courage and leadership to oppose state mandates covering Orinda's land.

Taxes in Orinda are becoming burdensome. In recent years, the voters have approved new taxes for Orinda's library and schools. The voters have been very generous. Now, they should demand a limit on city taxes and city spending.

The time has come for all city-council members, especially the new ones (Mr. Fay and Mr. Kosla), to refrain from timidity and weakness.

If the city council fails to oppose more residential development, the council will have given more Orinda residents reasons to leave the city and find better places to live. ■



The November 2018 Orinda City Council election has given the city's power brokers complete control over city hall.

ICON

page 3