

From: [Kalpana Ravinarayanan](#)
To: [Info](#)
Cc: ssmith@cityoforinda.org; imiller@cityoforinda.org
Subject: Re: Amended Fuel Break Ordinance 23-08
Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2023 12:11:54 AM

Dear President and Directors of Moraga-Orinda Fire Protection District and Mayor and representatives on the Orinda City Council,

We are new residents building our home in Orinda. We have lived in the bay area for over 23 years and have come to love the quiet, scenically beautiful town of Orinda nestled within the rolling hills of east bay. We specifically bought our property to live sustainably with nature around us.

We were forwarded the amended fuel break ordinance 23-08 and are very confused by its language. Some parts seem to suggest that we need to completely clear cut large areas of vegetation around the home and community (which I am sure are not the intent as that will significantly create native habitat loss, heat islands, erosion, water and air quality issues, aquifer loss and landslide/mudslide risks) - but it is hard to understand the proposed rules without multiple examples, models and clarifications of intent and how it balances fire safety with necessary local ecological balance. We do believe fire safety is an important consideration in the times we live in and we want to support the MOFD in its continued vigilance for the community - however, we would like opportunity and time to understand, clarify and perhaps suggest amendments to the proposed ordinance. In particular, we would like the ordinance to come with very clear models and examples of dos and don'ts, zone/micro-environment specific adjustments (again with examples and models), what alternatives were considered and rejected and would definitely like to understand how this compares with steps taken in other cities and towns and state-wide policies.

Please give us (the community) time and opportunity to participate and collaborate in this process with forums for public comment, collaboration with our city council, and other voices in the community and environmental research. In addition, please consider this a vote toward establishing a balance between long term environmental stewardship, conservation, health, community voice and fire safety taken as whole instead of in silos.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
Kalpana Ravinarayanan
Wilder, Orinda

From: jonathan@sojourningsoul.net
To: [Holbrook, Marcia](#)
Subject: Correspondence for MOFD
Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2023 8:35:31 AM

To MOFD,

I wish to bring your attention to an occurrence at your Sept. 6th, 2023 special meeting where the Mayor of Orinda asked you to slow down the process of approving your new ordinance to allow some time for the City Council's political process to come up to speed with your own. You see, as I recall it, at a previous meeting the fire chief explained that the text in question was being taken out of the fire code (which requires approval by local governments) and being made an ordinance (which requires only MOFD's approval), in part, to avoid the approval process offered by local the governments. Or, put another way, by turning these codes into an ordinance MOFD thereby enjoys a minimum of public input and political discussion.

So, what happened? Not only did the MOFD board cut the City Council out of an opportunity to have full participation in the approval process, but you also utterly ignored the mayor's request to slow down the approval process on your end.

Doubtless, you have your reasons for expediting your timetable by minimizing public input, but, I ask you, is this what good stewardship looks like? Or good governance? Is this how a good neighbor behaves?

Perhaps not.

Indeed, it appears that you have misbehaved on this score from the very beginning in 2018 by taking a know-it-all posture rather than, over time, building strong public approval for your draconian rule changes. On the one hand, the fire chief was admirably generous with his time, meeting with any and all groups who requested that he deliver to them the top down assessment of the problems as well as the solutions which would be expediently visited upon them.

But, unfortunately, this know-it-all, go it alone attitude also led the district to avoid learning from the experience of sister agencies with decades of experience in vegetation management. (Five years ago, MOFD had no such experience whatsoever.) As a consequence of this, now under threat of a writ of mandate lawsuit, the district is paying consultants for a "crash course" in environmental law, spurred by the ladies of Greenfire Law who (in a letter to the district dated August 2, 2023*) caught MOFD with its pants down regarding standard CEQA policies and practices. Had the fire district shown humility and been more amenable to genuinely partnering with--and endeavoring to learn from--fellow stakeholders from the beginning, it could have, and should have, begun learning these lessons five years back.

Well, humility is out of style these days, one might observe (and I am certainly no paragon thereof, myself), but as the swell of public discontent continues to grow over your harsh tactics (as citizens may perceive them) you might consider trying to borrow some of that precious stuff if you can't find enough on hand to meet the occasion.

Best wishes.
~Jonathan Goodwin
Canyon, Calif.

* https://legistarweb-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/attachment/pdf/2130157/Second_potential_case_2023-08-02_Greenfire_Law_Jessica_L._Blome_Susann_M._Bradford_CEQA_Notice_re_MOFD_Ord_23-04_Final.pdf