

# Orcutt PIONEER FREE

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## Planning Commission Set to Reject Development Near Sunny Hills



**On a four to one vote** the Santa Barbara County Planning Commission indicated it is ready to reject a 119-home development off Clark Avenue near Highway 101. The development, on Key Site 3, would cluster single

story homes at the northern end of the property adjacent the Sunny Hills Modular Home Park. The decision and denial findings by the Commission will be considered on May 26th and sent to the Board of Supervisors for final

consideration.

The one and two story homes range in size from 1100 to 1600 square feet and would surround an eight acre site already approved for affordable housing.

"There are just too many flaws," said Commissioner Larry Ferini who represents the Fourth District including Orcutt. "I believe a rezone to extremely smaller lots when neighbors earlier purchased homes on five and twenty acres lots is inappropriate."

He and the other Commissioners also had problems with maintenance and legal questions surrounding secondary access on Chancellor street, a private roadway.

And he said the project is not popular with the Orcutt community.

Scores of Orcutt residents protested the project in public testimony and in contacts to the Commissioners.

Fifth District Commissioner Dan Blough questioned why the County wants 12 acres of open space adjacent to the project. "I think the County already has too much open space to maintain. I am a developer, a property rights guy, and I have no problem turning this one down."

Third District Commissioner John Parke said he would like a traffic signal on Clark Avenue. He also said he volunteers at the Orcutt Senior Center OASIS and he meets people who love their community. "Most are adamantly opposed to this project".

First District Commissioner Michael Cooney said the developer had earlier worked out an agreement on secondary access on Chancellor Street but the homeowners backed out. "The developer was caught in a no win situation."

The lone vote supporting the project came from Commissioner Laura Bridley who said the County needs to find places to "shove housing. And I use that term intentionally. This project might be better now than what we are forced to accept in a year and a half."

Earlier in the meeting, the Commission turned down a request by the developer of Key Site 21 for 129 homes near fairways at Ranch Maria Golf Club and set a hearing to consider revisions before sending denial findings to the Board of Supervisors. The developer wanted the County to consider mitigations to lessen the impact on biological resources near the golf course. The Planning Commission denied the request and instructed County staff to prepare the denial findings for the Board of Supervisors.

*Steve Southwick reporting*

*Steve Southwick reporting*

## Natural Healing Center Legal Action Puts Retail Cannabis Process on Hold

A petition for a Writ of Mandate has been filed by attorneys for Natural Healing Center (NHC) resulting in Santa Barbara County releasing the phase three preliminary rankings of the cannabis retail applications in all areas but Orcutt.

According to the Writ of Mandate, NHC, owned by Helios Dayspring, scored 84 points in phase two, which analyzed the business plan of the six Orcutt applicants. Eighty-five was the passing score. As a result, NHC was left out of the Neighborhood Compatibility Phase. Attorneys filed the writ which stopped the Orcutt ranking process. The petition claims the County abused its authority by discriminating against

NHC in its review process in phase two. Dayspring claims he should have received more points from some of the various categories in the business plan he submitted. NHC purchased Old Town Market last year and evicted the market owners with the intent of opening a retail cannabis store.

Then in October, NHC sold Old Town Market with the condition the new owners could proceed with a market and café if the County eventually rejects the cannabis application. The hopeful new owners told the Orcutt Pioneer they are still proceeding with architectural plans for the market and upcoming café area.

Brittany Heaton of the County

Executive Office said the Writ of Mandate prevents the County from further consideration of the five remaining applicants for a single Orcutt cannabis permit until the Court rules on the merits of the Writ. That hearing is set for May 21. The other Orcutt applicants are: 155 East Clark Ave. (empty building next door to Kay's Country Kitchen), 235 East Clark Ave. (Orcutt Chiropractic Health Center), 3596 Orcutt Road (Medina Tire Shop in front of Spencer's Market), 3550 Orcutt Road (Diamond Nails behind Spencer's) and 1604 East Clark Ave. Building B, Suite 1 (new shopping center at Stillwell and Clark Ave.)

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**"Orcutt News for Orcutt Folks"**  
Published on or about the fourth  
Wednesday of each month  
Distribution 17,000+ :  
15,091 in mail  
1,998 delivered to businesses in  
the Orcutt area  
**Publisher:** Stephanie Southwick Hull  
**Editors:** Steve Southwick  
& Stephanie Southwick Hull  
**Reporters & Photographers:**  
Steve Southwick, Stephanie Southwick Hull,  
James Jepsen, Michael Shaw,  
Katy Jacobson  
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pioneer@jamesjepsen.com  
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Road Maintenance on Orcutt Roads



It will probably be July before all is done, but traffic slowdown because of the Bradley Underground Project by Righetti High School is well into its third month. The project is administered by PG&E. According to County Roads Maintenance Manager Kurt Klucker, the project will put all aerial electrical and communication lines underground. The existing wooden utility poles will be eliminated, and street lights behind the sidewalk (similar to existing lights on the east side of Bradley) will be installed. According to Klucker, these improvements will better protect the utilities, reduce risk of overhead electrocution, and beautify the corridor. Later this summer the County Road Maintenance Annual Plan will include an overlay for Cherry Avenue from Clark Avenue to Patterson Road. Klucker says the plan also includes preventative fog seal work on other recent overlay project at Rice Ranch Road, Clark Ave, Orcutt Rd, Union Valley Parkway, Bethany Lane, California Blvd and Broadway in Old Orcutt. The fog seal protects and extends the overlay investment. Some repair and an overlay will progress on Lancaster Drive into June.

Steve Southwick reporting



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# Girls Clothed by Local Women's Organization to Help Prevent Human Trafficking

Local members of the Relief Society, the women's group from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, sewed and donated 186 dresses for girls, hundreds of pairs of girl's underwear, soap, and little homemade dolls to the charity "Dress a Girl Around the World." Beginning in January and concluding in March, this project was part of a celebration of the annual birthday of the Relief Society organization. As one of the oldest and largest organizations for women in the world, the Relief Society was first organized in March of 1842, and now has more than 7 million members worldwide.

"The goal of this project is to bring dignity to girls and teach them about God's love for them. In many areas if a girl is dressed in clean clothing in good repair, they are treated better and child trafficking is reduced," explained a letter sent out at the beginning of the project in January. The Relief Society

focuses on service to those in need, and local leader Becky Sais with her assistants Kirsten Bird, Angela Gonzales and Carolyn Ostrin, saw the "Dress a Girl Around the World" project as a great fit for local members. Women from the seven local congregations of the church participated in the project. This was done in conjunction with St. John's Lutheran Church in Arroyo Grande. In addition, food, and socks were also collected for the Good Samaritan Homeless Shelter and Santa Barbara County FoodBank to help those in need locally.

"We were moved to tears with your kindness and generosity," said Becky Sais at the conclusion of the project in a drive-through drop off event celebrating the organization's birthday. Each person that came to the event received a fancy birthday cupcake to celebrate.

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## Orcutt Schools Update District Prepares for a Productive Summer

*Dr. Holly Edds, Superintendent, OUSD*

It may be April, but we in the Orcutt Union School District already are working hard on what figures to be an important summer.

After the current school year concludes, we will be offering several summer learning options to students. We will begin transitioning to a more typical routine with regard to campus operations. And staff will be doing some reflecting about the lessons of the past year and how they can improve how we educate students in 2021-2022.

Our plans for summertime education touch all 14 grade levels we serve.

For students going into grades 1-6, we will offer a four-week summer school running from June 14 through July 9. Classes will take place five days a week and will focus on academic acceleration so students are set up for success in the coming school year. As needed, teachers will implement interventions that will address learning gaps. Social/emotional learning, the arts, and outdoor recreation will be incorporated. Based on demand, virtual programming will

be available to students and families that prefer to stay in a distance learning format this summer.

Children going into transitional kindergarten and kindergarten can participate in a "Jump Start Camp" that will be held the two weeks prior to the start of the new school year (July 26 through August 6). Teachers will frontload key concepts and skills so participants start strong once the school year begins.

Secondary students have their own set of choices. Students heading into seventh and eighth graders at our junior high schools and into ninth grade at Orcutt Academy High School will be able to participate in orientation activities scheduled before the new school year. School expectations, team building, and games will be on the agenda. OAHs students in grades 10-12 who need to recover credit will have their own program.

"I'm excited that we are able to offer this type of program to students," says Colleen Kuykendall, a district teacher on special assignment who has helped with the planning

for summer. "It's valuable in that we can challenge and enrich our students while also addressing any achievement gaps that might be there."

"I think summer school will present a great opportunity for students to accelerate the learning," adds Ralph Dunlap School Principal Joe Schmidt. "If students fell behind at all, it'll help catch them up. Because it's five days a week, it also will help rebuild some academic stamina."

"Students who have just hit their stride will be able to keep chugging along this summer," says Aaron Kozel, a first- and second-grade teacher at Ralph Dunlap School who has applied to teach in summer school. "I'm glad students will have this opportunity."

Over the summer, our district expects to begin to move away from some of the stringent health guidelines associated with COVID-19. Safety measures will continue to be in place during summer programs following current Santa Barbara County Public Health Department requirements. While students and staff probably will need to continue wearing masks, we are hopeful some of the more stringent restrictions may be relaxed in the coming weeks.

"It's going to be nice to have students in the classroom this summer for five days of in-person instruction per week," says Janet

Bertoldi, the district's assistant superintendent of educational services. "And we love that students will be able to enjoy each other, make new friends, and have fun."

Summer also will be a time to take stock. Orcutt educators will be looking back on all they have taken on during the pandemic, from establishing online "classrooms" to meeting with students via Zoom, and consider which practices should remain post-COVID.

"There's so much to think about," says Cher Manich, a district teacher on special assignment. "We're at the precipice of taking education in a different direction – one that integrates what we have done for many years with the new set of skills students and teachers have picked up in this past year. Education does not have to be the way it always was. We can rethink what we are doing for the good of students."

Springtime is wonderful, and we certainly will give students our very best all the way through the last day of school on June 4. But we are especially excited about making this summer a special time that launches all of us – students, families, and educators – into a new and better paradigm for educating children.

*Superintendent Dr. Holly Edds can be contacted by phone at 938-8900 or by e-mail at [hedds@orcutt-schools.net](mailto:hedds@orcutt-schools.net). She can be followed on Twitter at @hce101.*

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Letters From the Mailroom

Orcutt Citizen has Major Concerns with Fire Protection in Orcutt

A longtime Orcutt resident has sent a single-spaced, four page letter to the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and media outlets about what he feels are inequitable fire protection services in the north county, particularly Orcutt. The resident, who is raising his family and has lived in Orcutt since 1988 and wishes to remain anonymous, expresses concerns about what he feels “are lack of resources in the north county”.

He says beginning in 1928, the Orcutt Fire Department, mostly volunteer staffed, had four units available to respond to a structure fire or medical situation. “We were fully staffed. For decades there were times when the Orcutt Fire Department had three engines on scene of major incidents.”

However, in 2008, the City of Santa Maria absorbed the airport station, leaving that station manned with only one firefighter driving an airport crash truck dedicated to the airport. “For the

past thirteen years Orcutt has had only two engines and with major population increases Orcutt has had reduced fire protection.” He continues, “Goleta, with a population less than Orcutt, has three stations available and twelve firefighters. Orcutt has two engines and eight firefighters. We at least must get back to what we once had.”

The writer pointed to a situation a few weeks ago when a youngster suffered a broken leg near Pine Grove School. Both Orcutt engines responded leaving the Orcutt community vulnerable if a third call had come in. He insists this is an ongoing problem.

A path to resolve these issues, he says, would be to establish a Quality

Assurance Committee. “It should exist to truly advocate for the taxpayers and to address public safety shortfalls. Our communities deserve nothing but the best from our public safety providers.”

Steve Southwick reporting

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"As the economy opens up, look for local Farmer's Markets featuring fresh, locally grown strawberries. Contact the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Visitors & Convention Bureau for details."

Janet Silveria, President/CEO



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