

Moraga Joins Regional Communications System

By Steve Angelides

The Moraga Town Council has unanimously agreed to sign a letter of intent to join the East Bay Regional Communication System (EBRCS) to provide radio communications for its police and public works departments.

This new system, which is eventually expected to provide coordinated emergency communications for all public agencies in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, except BART, is not yet funded, but is expected to cost \$60 million, according to Moraga Police Chief Mark Ruppenthal. Ruppenthal said the plan is to seek federal funding for the new system. The letter of intent does not bind Moraga to join the system, but allows the Town to get in on the ground floor of the planning.

As a show of good faith, the town is also putting up \$4,400 along with its letter of intent. That amount is calculated based on \$100 per radio. Between the Police Department and the Public Works Department, the Town currently has 44 radios.

Emergency communications for the Town are currently provided through the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department. Using the current system, the police departments of Moraga, Orinda, and Lafayette can easily communicate with each other. However, with all of the other local agencies expected to join the new system, the Town would have no choice but to follow suit.

Ruppenthal explained that during any emergency it is necessary for all of the agencies to be able to communicate with each other in order to do their work. He said that this became apparent locally after the Loma Prieta earthquake and the Oakland Hills Fire, and became apparent nationally after 2001.

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