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Published June 10th, 2009

MOFD Approves Strategic Plan

By Lucy Amaral

At a special meeting held on Wednesday, June 3, the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Directors approved the District's 2009 Strategic Plan.

Board Member Frank Sperling said this document represents a commitment to the community by the Board and the Staff to move forward with improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the District. "It's critical that an organization has a purpose and a direction," said Sperling. "(This plan) will plot out our direction over the next two years...essentially what do we want to accomplish and how will we accomplish it."

MOFD Fire Chief Pete Nowicki said that the Strategic Plan will provide a vision for the near future and establish obtainable goals that will enhance every aspect of how MOFD does business and provides service to the community. And, while the plan was only recently approved, the District has not been sitting idly by.

"Even as we were putting these strategies and ideas into written form, we've already begun working on most of the initiatives in the document," said Nowicki.

The plan identified five areas of focus: Operational Readiness; Human Resources Development; Community Partnerships and Outreach, Fire Prevention and Education; and, Fiscal Responsibility. Within each of these areas, specific items were apportioned as objectives with strategies assigned to meet each objective. In the 12 years that the MOFD has been in existence, there have been two other strategic plans, the last one being a five-year plan. Sperling said that based on advice from their consulting partner, Dr. Larry Bianati, the Board decided that this strategic plan will be a two- to three- year plan.

"This plan represents a refined approach in terms of tackling the current issues that are facing the District and at the same time allowing us to continue to focus on the basics of providing excellent fire and medical service to the community," said Sperling. "Additionally, it more clearly delineates the Chief and Board roles in accomplishing our goals."

Nowicki added that the new plan will also serve as an adjunct to the new fire chief selection, providing candidates with information regarding the direction of the district.

The plan is not static and will be adjusted as necessary, said Sperling. "It is our intention to continue to update and/or reissue strategic plans on an ongoing basis," he said.

A copy of the Strategic Plan can be found on the MOFD website (www.mofd.org).

MOFD Exterior Hazard Control Program Deadline Looms

Beginning on June 17, 2009, the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) will begin

inspections to see if property owners are complying with the 'minimum abatement standards' for creating and maintaining defensible space around structures. More commonly referred to as "weed abatement," exterior hazards can include items such as trash, dead trees, dead shrubs, bushes, and grass/weeds. MOFD Fire Chief Pete Nowicki said that hazard abatement also covers a wider range of dangerous situations like wood piles up against a house, pine needles on a roof, lack of a spark arrester on a chimney or tree branches too close to the chimney. In April of this year, MOFD mailed notices to owners of properties in the fire 'interface' areas of the district. "An 'interface' is where the residence or building property meets or abuts natural vegetation in a wildland area, or there is undeveloped land on the parcel where vegetation may become a fire hazard," said Nowicki.

Owners have until June 15 to comply with the abatement notice, and the work is required to be completed by this date.

If owners have not complied, a second letter will be sent to property owners. After the second inspection, if a fire hazard is still not dealt with properly, the District will have the hazard abated by its contractor and the parcel owner will be billed for the work and administrative costs.

The Exterior Hazard Control Standards as defined by MOFD can be found on the MOFD website (www.mofd.org).

L. Amaral

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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