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Q&A with MOFD Fire Chief Randall Bradley

By Lucy Amaral



Chief Randall Bradley at the Orinda Liaison meeting last Monday Photo Ohlen Alexander

Randall Bradley was sworn in as Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) new Fire Chief on November 18th. He joins the District at a time of economic challenges and political controversy. Here, he offers insight into his experience, his goals for the District and his response to some of those concerns.

Why take this job?

I have prepared my whole career to be a Fire Chief. I was the Fire Chief at Lawrence Livermore Fire Department for six years. When Lawrence Livermore consolidated with the bigger Alameda County Fire Department, I became a Deputy Fire Chief. While I gained valuable experience in my position as a Deputy Chief for a large metropolitan fire department, I really wanted to return to my role as a Fire Chief in a smaller organization. When I became aware of the opening at Moraga-Orinda Fire District, it became apparent, almost immediately, that MOFD was a great opportunity for me to use my experience and education to lead a quality organization into the future.

How has your experience with Alameda County Fire District and Lawrence Livermore Fire Department prepared you for this position?
As the Deputy Chief of Support Services at the 350 member Alameda County Fire Department, I was responsible for finance and budgeting, facilities and apparatus, public relations and education, emergency preparedness and contract administration. I was also responsible for contract administration for two cities and two National Laboratories that contract with Alameda County Fire for fire protection which provided me the opportunity to interact with commissions, boards and city councils.

I was the Fire Chief at Lawrence Livermore and, while it was a unique fire department, it had a lot of similarities to MOFD. I had about 100 personnel, 50 of which were uniformed, and an \$18 million dollar budget. The department was well trained and staffed and we had a significant wildland urban interface concern at our testing facility near the Altamont Pass. As the fire chief I was responsible for budget development, strategic planning, organizational development and overall leadership of the fire department that protected some extremely important national assets.

I believe my experiences with both organizations really prepared me for my new position as the MOFD Fire Chief.

What opportunities do you see for MOFD?

First, I believe that MOFD is an excellent fire district. The personnel are well trained, well equipped and they really care about the communities they serve. The Board of Directors are elected community servants who bring exceptional business and community service backgrounds that enable them to provide the required direction and oversight of the District. The quality workforce and the leadership provided by the Board provides opportunities to continue to develop an organization that is responsive to the citizens we serve and to continue to look for areas of improvement in service delivery and fiscal responsibility.

What challenges are you facing as you take on this position?

One of my primary concerns is how the economic downturn will continue to impact the District. I believe we will need to continue to evaluate the economic forecasts and adjust our budgetary priorities accordingly. I also am concerned about our community relations. Due to some negative articles in the press recently, I believe we need to continue to market our Fire District to our communities and ensure they understand the vital service the District provides to the public. As I stated earlier, our firefighters are very well trained and equipped to protect the lives and properties of the citizens we serve.

What improvements do you see that can be made within the fire department itself?

I am new and I am trying not to make any judgments until I have the time to evaluate the organization and the programs and services offered by the District. I am a firm believer that there are drivers that influence how organizations develop and the reasons decision are made. I need to understand those drivers and conduct program reviews to identify areas that require attention. My first impression is that MOFD is an excellent organization that will just require some fine tuning.

...With MOFD's relationship with the community?

I think my opportunity to improve our relationship with the community will be by providing the best fire protection and emergency medical service available base on the resources that are allocated to the District. I also believe the Fire District must continue to be involved in the community and give back to community in the form of (off duty) charitable public service when provided the opportunity.

The cost of the MOFD to Orinda continues to be a concern to a group of Orinda citizens. How do you plan to address this?

The Fire District is confident that we provide all of the communities that we serve with effective and efficient fire protection and emergency medical services. Our District was formed to ensure service levels were initially increased, then maintained and ultimately controlled at the local level. I believe that we need to engage in an open dialogue with the concerned citizens and communicate our

fire protection and emergency medical response service levels and the drivers behind how the service levels were developed and why it is important to maintain the levels under a Fire District governance model. We also need to listen to their concerns, ideas and consider their solutions to identified issues.

At a recent Orinda City Council meeting, you expressed the desire to meet with the Council to discuss 'mutual interests.' What are those mutual interests?

Examples of mutual interest would be community planning, emergency preparedness, city infrastructure (water systems), fire and police emergency coordination and coordinated strategic planning. I also plan on meeting with the Moraga Council to discuss these items as well.

When you eventually leave MOFD, what do you hope to have accomplished?

I hope to leave it better than I found it through leadership and fiscal responsibility.

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