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Moraga Orinda Fire District
Board of Directors Meetings
Meetings of the MOFD Board of Directors are open to the public and take place on the third Wednesday of each month in the Board Room, Administration Building, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga.

Next meeting(s):

October 6, Special Meeting, time TBD

MOFD Open House, Station 41 (1280 Moraga Way, Moraga), 10am-2pm

October 20th, 7pm
(go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for more information)

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MOFD Approves 2010/2011 Fiscal Budget

By Lucy Amaral

On September 15, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Directors approved its General Fund and Special Revenue Fund budgets for fiscal year 2010/2011. The District has been working with the budget for several months now, however the Board was required to pass a final version of the budget no later than September 30.

Fire Chief Randy Bradley presented the Board with a breakdown of expected revenues and expenses, highlighting the District's efforts to balance the budget while maintaining the current level of service. Bradley said that expected revenues for the year are \$18,100,893 with expected expenses of \$18,277,788.

Due to property tax shortfalls, MOFD originally found itself with a deficit of about \$450,000. Bradley said that with cost cutting measures ranging from renegotiating insurance premiums to cutting laundry service, the District was able to bring the deficit down to less than \$178,000. Revenue for the General Fund budget comes from property tax, earnings on investments, charges for services and intergovernmental fees.

The Chief offered two op-

tions to balance the budget: Institute furlough days and hour restrictions to administrative personnel (including the Chief and Fire Marshall) as well as shifting two full time positions to part time; or, using money from MOFD's reserve fund.

After a brief discussion as to further cost cutting options, the possible surplus from the 2009/2010 budget and the probability that conditions would improve next year, the Board voted to add reserve funds to balance the budget.

Bradley also advised that revenue for the Special Revenue Fund for fiscal 2010/2011 will be \$1,302,957. The District's Special Revenue Fund is currently used for items such as the replacement of fire-fighting equipment, building upgrades and apparatus. Revenue for this fund comes from Fire Flow Tax, earnings on investments, federal grants and insurance recovery.

Bradley said that included in the Special Revenue Fund expenses this year is the installation of a new station exhaust system and the purchase a Type 3 Wildland Engine, which replaces the District's outdated Type 4 Engine recently considered totaled from a rollover accident.

Race To Nowhere Hits the Big Screen

By Andrea A. Firth



Producer and Director Vicki Abeles
Photo by Ohlen Alexander

"This is about the health of our children," says Lafayette resident Vicki Abeles, the producer and co-director of the documentary film *Race to Nowhere*, which will be screened at hundreds of theaters and schools nationwide over the next month. Stress-related illnesses, sleep deprivation, and depression are among the negative health consequences students in the film describe experiencing as a result of the unyielding demands of school and the pressure to compete and perform in today's achievement-obsessed society. "Our kids need some balance in their lives," says Abeles, who began working on the film back in 2007 motivated by her struggle to manage the hectic schedules and academic expectations that faced her three children.

Abeles, formerly a corporate attorney on Wall Street and at Gold-

man Sachs, repurposed her skills to the movie industry, because she believed film was the best way to start a national dialogue about a school system that she found was plagued with cheating, disengagement, and the inability to adequately prepare young people for college and the workplace. "We need a paradigm shift," says Abeles.

While she acknowledges that change is going to take time, Abeles has seen examples of parents, teachers, and school administrators coming together after seeing the film and working toward alternative approaches. "The film is inspiring change wherever we go," says Abeles. "It's difficult for parents and schools to effect change individually," says the filmmaker adding, "It is easier for a community to make change when they come together."

The film's message is resonating with audiences and a grass roots effort has begun to spread the word. The release of *Race to Nowhere* at prominent theaters in New York and Los Angeles in September was met with good reviews and strong audience attendance, says Abeles. Several hundred more screenings are scheduled throughout the fall, and several thousand requests to screen the film are pending.

"The reason we are able to get the film out into the community is due to the support of motivated

parents and educators," says Abeles, explaining that schools and local organizations identify venues and co-sponsor the screenings. Reel Link Films, Abeles' production company, donates half of the ticket sale proceeds back to these groups to offset expenses. A facilitation guide to complement the film has also been developed as a resource for schools.

"It's all been good—an incredible experience," says Abeles, reflecting upon the 3 1/2 year journey from her start as a neophyte filmmaker, one that she says has helped her to grow both professionally and personally. As she manages the documentary's launch and distribution, Abeles also facilitates the parents group on Edutopia, part of the George Lucas Educational Foundation, and she has started to work on other education-related film projects. She believes the experience has been positive for her children as well. "It's been valuable for them to see me take risks and to hear about my failures during the project along with the successes," says Abeles. "I'm a different person and parent due to this work."

Race to Nowhere will be shown at Las Lomas High School in Walnut Creek on Thursday, September 30th and at The New Rheim Theatre on Monday, October 4th at 7 p.m. For more information and other screening locations go to www.racetonowhere.com.

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