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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:

Next regular MOFD Board meeting is September 21, 7:00pm, Station 141 (1280 Moraga Way, Moraga),
(go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for more information)

MOFD Delays Decision about Administrative Offices, adds More Options

By Lucy Amaral

Citing the need for further review and more information, the Moraga Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) Board of Directors opted at its last meeting to delay any decision regarding combining and moving its administrative offices.

Options that are on the table included leasing space from the City of Orinda, buying a building located next to Station 41 in Moraga, retrofitting the current administrative offices located in Station 41, or leaving the offices split as they are currently.

In a presentation giving an overview of the process so far,

MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley added two additional options to the mix: a modular building that would be built behind Station 41, and the retrofitting of the lower level of Station 45, located in downtown Orinda. While one would be new construction and another a complete retrofit, the cost of both options were similar to the other three original proposals. Chief Bradley said that he is still most in favor of purchasing the building located at 1150 Moraga Way—he believes it offers the most benefits including adaptability, improved efficiencies and the

possible revenue generation.

The Board members agreed that retrofitting Station 43 in Orinda is the first priority. A project management company has been retained and the process of rebuilding the station is underway. Retrofitting Station 41 and combining the two administrative offices were considered second and third priorities, according to the MOFD facilities report.

Board members continued to be divided in their support of the various options. New concerns included cash flow challenges, taking established priorities out of

sequence, and possibly taking on too many projects at one time.

The Board agreed to have the finance committee meet to review forecasts regarding funding for the projects. The Board also asked Chief Bradley to flesh out the new options, allowing the Board to compare them side by side with the original proposals.

Four members of the Board will meet on September 21 to review the additional information. The full Board will meet again on September 27 to deliberate and possibly decide on a course of action.

...from Front Page

Firestorm: Prepare Your Home

... continued from page A1

To be prepared, Bradley said residents need to change how they look at protecting their home from wild-fire. During a large-scale fire, there won't be time to turn on a sprinkler, move firewood away from the house or even take down decorations. "If the hills are on fire, and the wind is blowing toward your home, we are going to evacuate you," he said. "Residents must think about how their home is going to handle a major fire when no one is (on site) to help it."

Bradley said that there are about 22 firefighters on duty each day and 10,000 homes in the MOFD area. Even with outside support, during a major wildland fire, resources will be stretched thin. Creating a defensible space before it is needed will be key. "Chances are we are going to be up on the hill trying to stop the fire," he said. "Creating an ignition resistant neighborhood can dramatically improve safety and survivability."

To help in the process, MOFD is promoting the FireWise program. FireWise, a program managed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), focuses on encouraging communities to adopt a long-term, proactive approach to protect their homes before a fire starts. In April, MOFD hosted a FireWise Workshop, training volunteers from Lamorinda to conduct home assessments. The course, prepared by the NFPA's Fire-

Wise Communities program, taught the volunteers how wildfires burn homes where open space and homes meet, trained to review a home's "ignition zone," and how to make suggestions to the homeowner.

Charlie Green, one of the trained volunteer assessors were a support system for the community, not an enforcement arm. "We are at a home strictly by invitation," he said. "We offer suggestions that may help in case of a fire storm, to help prevent their home from actually going up in flames."

"We give a simple list of suggestions," Green added. "Then, it is up to the homeowner to decide what to do, (however) it is certainly to their advantage and the neighborhood's advantage to deal with these things."

Homeowners Keith and Susan Horrocks of Orinda invited MOFD to their home for a review of their 'home ignition zone'. Bradley and the assessors looked for the 'ladder,' the most logical path a large firestorm would take to reach one's home. At this assessment, the group noticed a row of pine trees that could move a fire to a lower hedge then ignite a wooden fence that was attached to the home.

While not every threat can be eliminated, Bradley said it is possible to do small things to make it more dif-

ficult for a fire to reach a home. Changes the group recommended for the Horrocks' home ranged from simply cleaning up some plant debris to working with neighbors to 'limb up' several trees that were leaning onto the Horrocks' property, and covering part of their roof.

MOFD has applied for two grants, totaling \$180,000, for education, evacuation planning and fuel reduction. Bradley said that once MOFD receives the grant money, they plan to issue \$5,000 grants to groups of five homeowners (who apply jointly) in the same neighborhood to help with the cost of fire hazard reduction.

Bradley also said that part of the grant money will be used to fund more home assessment training programs and is working on a schedule for the training sessions. Currently MOFD has 15 trained volunteers available for home assessments, and so far 35 homes have been assessed.

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What Can You Do?

MOFD's home assessment review, which is offered to residents at no charge, can provide a basic list of suggestions to make a home more resistant to fires. Below are some examples of potential hazards from the FireWise Communities website that assessors (and homeowners) might find. (Not a complete list):

- Use of flammable roofing materials
- Overlapping home ignition zones
- Placement of homes with respect to topography (e.g., at the top of a bluff)
- Dense/unhealthy vegetation
- Locations of trees and heavy vegetation in relationship to homes
- Flammable vegetation in direct contact with houses
- Attached wooden decks
- Flammable vegetation in direct contact with the house
- Leaf needle build up on roofs/gutters
- Attached wooden fences/decks (Remember that if it is attached to the house, it is part of the house...to a wildfire)
- Flammable furniture/cushions on decks or porches
- Vinyl soffits

NFPA research shows that there are things individuals can do to improve their home's chances of surviving a passing wildfire. The FireWise website offers suggestions for successful FireWise modifications. These include but are not limited to:

- Use of fire-resistant native vegetation
- Fire-free space surrounding the structure
- Use of stone and/or other non-flammable building components for walkways and driveways
- Thinned vegetation.

More information can be found on the FireWise website www.firewise.org/communities.



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