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Q&A With MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley

By Lucy Amaral

In part two of an interview with Moraga Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) Fire Chief Randy Bradley, he addresses concerns that have been brought by District residents, notes some accomplishments and discusses goals for the next year.

Q. Some District residents have the opinion that Orinda is paying more for service than Moraga. Can you address this?

A. We are one Fire District and we operate as one District. When the District consolidated, the goal was to gain local control over tax dollars and to improve service levels, equipment and facilities in Orinda and Moraga. We continue to accomplish those goals. Prior to the consolidation, southern Orinda was within the Moraga Fire District due to the proximity of the homes to the Moraga Fire Stations. When the tax revenues from the homes in southern Orinda are apportioned to Moraga the perceived inequity no longer has merit.

Orinda also required extensive fire station and equipment upgrades after the consolidation and the District has spent approximately \$9 million (including fire station 43 replacement) in Orinda compared to \$3 million in Moraga. It should also be noted that the assessed property values in Moraga have trended up and the assessed property values in Orinda have actually trended down in the last two years.

Q. MOFD District residents have a concern about low water pressure. How has MOFD addressed this?

A. The bigger concern is actually the size of pipes and gallons per minute the pipes supply. The problem with the water pipes is similar to the problem with the roads. The system was designed as a rural system to provide domestic water services to homes. When I arrived I was impressed that an older community with very low housing densities would have a municipal water system with an abundance of fire hydrants. East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD) owns the water system and the Fire District has no authority to modify the system. However, the District utilizes compensatory measures to ensure we have the needed water supply at fires within the District. We send a fire engine with a 2,500-gallon tank to fires in areas that do not have adequate water supply and we also respond additional fire engines when required.

Q. Now that the option of purchasing a building to house the administrative staff has been taken off the table, how will MOFD proceed?

A. We will continue to evaluate our options. One option the Board is considering is to lease space until we address our cash flow issue and have a better understanding of how we will address our unfunded liabilities. We continue to negotiate with the City of Orinda and there is additional space in Moraga that just became available for lease. There is also an investor who has offered to purchase 1150 Moraga Way (the building the District was considering buying) and lease the building back to the District. Currently, I believe that City Hall is our best option but we need to agree on a lease rate that will be acceptable to both agencies.

Q. What are some achievements you feel you have accomplished during your time with MOFD?

A. One of the most positive aspects of being the Fire Chief for MOFD are the firefighters in the fire stations, management staff and the administrative staff. They are committed to providing superior customer service on a continuing basis. Our firefighters are the best trained, professional and community-oriented firefighters that I have ever been associated with.

The District also has two ongoing initiatives, funded through grants, that I believe have made a positive impact: our "Firewise" and "CPR Anytime" programs. With Firewise, we have trained citizens and fire personnel how to complete home assessments that identify simple measures to improve the survivability of homes during wildfire. I strongly believe this program will improve the overall safety of our communities.

Our "CPR Anytime" program uses a simple kit, mannequin and DVD to train individuals in basic CPR. By training people, the chances of someone witnessing a sudden cardiac arrest and immediately beginning CPR will increase dramatically. Witness CPR with a fast paramedic firefighter response will improve the survivability of patients. We have also worked hard to improve the District's relationship with the public. I have made presentations at service clubs and organizations to explain who we are, what we do, why we do it and how we do it. The presentations have been well received and I believe the communities have a better understanding of the Fire District.

We continue to support a robust school educational program. Each year every elementary school class is presented with information by firefighters concerning fire safety. The program builds on the information from the previous year at each grade level.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish in the next year?

A. To complete our Strategic Business Plan and begin to address our unfunded liabilities, add three more neighborhoods to our Firewise Program, train a minimum of 1,000 people in "Anytime CPR," and continue with the processes already in place and development progression for the replacement of Fire Station 43 in Orinda.

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