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Letters to the Editor



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MOFD

Editor:

These comments were originally intended to be delivered in person, but I am unable to make the meeting, and I am highly annoyed and insulted at the timing of this meeting as it was clearly designed to bypass the majority of public opinion and get lost in the Holiday season. I will make every attempt to get my views out to the community as well using the local media.

1. I believe Board VP Mr Weil made the following comment as a justification for this transaction: "Markets will only go up". Clearly they don't, because if they did this "historic" opportunity would not exist. Besides, this is a fire department, not a real estate speculator, using one man's opinion of the market is just ignorant. Market analysis strongly suggests the target project is over-valued by \$300,000 or more dollars, but price is really a secondary consideration compared to the next point.

2. Far more troubling, no entity, public or private, or government, should EVER invest their liquid reserves in an illiquid asset. NEVER. If funds have been raised and set aside for this purpose perhaps, but that is another discussion. This action is a violation of the fiduciary trust entrusted to the board. Personally, if one of my company management teams presented me with a project like this they would quickly be looking for new employment.

3. Add-on to an existing station if you must, use modular trailers until the funds have been raised to complete the construction project. Does admin space really trump the unfunded pension issues, existing station and equipment needs? Can you really make this argument? No, you can't.

4. Finally, I want to know who on the board, or the fire department, or both, is going to personally benefit from this transaction. A project such as this only lives and gets finagled through in the holidays because some person or group has a under-the-table benefit to make it happen. This project clearly violates every fiduciary and commonsense evaluation of capital allocation and risk management. I live on Crestview, the neighborhood that had to raise its own money to pave our street precisely because of long-forgotten decisions like this. As a community, as long as we are still digging a hole we can't begin to get out.

Glenn Millar
Orinda

Editor:

Emergency Service Not Top Priority for Morinda FD Directors . . . but speculating on commercial property IS!

MORAGA-ORINDA FIRE DISTRICT (MOFD) Directors are using taxpayer dollars to speculate on commercial property.

Yeah, ok, Orinda city already has a \$700 million unfunded liability that the city council seems to have no interest in paying down. So worrying about a two million dollar pittance may be a waste of time . . . But the number one priority for citizens should be emergency services - in which re-building the St. Stephens Fire Station is vitally important.

The MOFD Directors have decided, though, that the first priority should be for administrative offices - NOT rebuilding the St. Stephens fire station.

The MOFD Board will spend over TWO MILLION DOLLARS to buy a less than 10K ft2, burned-out, building in Moraga - in order to house twelve admin staffers.

Orinda pays 65% of the MOFD revenue, so Orinda taxpayers may soon be on the hook for nearly one-and-a-half million dollars for this Moraga building, but Moraga pays only \$770,000. Equitable?

And, Orinda will still not have its sub-standard (St. Stephens) fire station rebuilt.

The Directors, however, ARE proposing borrowing the money to fix the St. Stephens Station. Of course, Orinda taxpayers will ONLY pay 65% of the cost of the borrowed money. Moraga will pay 35%. Are we at equitable, yet?

The Orinda City Council COULD form an Orinda Fire District. Then its admin staff could be housed in unused space in the recently-built City Hall. That would save Orinda taxpayers nearly a MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND - since we would not have to buy the 9000 ft2 building in Moraga.

Orinda has already allowed \$16 million tax dollars, that might have been used for our roads, as a subsidy for emergency services in Moraga. Is this equitable?

The \$16 million pot-hole grows, and Orinda has less and less money for roads - AND still has sub-standard fire-response times into some parts of the town.

Wayne Phillips
Orinda

Editor:

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors has, by a 3 to 2 vote, decided to waste \$2.2 million of our taxpayer dollars in buying a burnt-out Moraga building and refurbishing it solely for the convenience of its 12-person administrative staff. This 12-person administrative staff is currently housed in two offices, one in Orinda and one in Moraga. The two-office locations have never had any problem communicating by telephone and e-mail or by a short 4-mile drive when necessary. The majority of the MOFD directors are spendaholics. This \$2.2 million could have been used to build a new St. Stephens fire station to replace the existing run-down station. Instead, the MOFD directors will take out a mortgage on an existing fire station to supply the money for St. Stephens. Thus we add \$2.2 million to the \$24 million debt the MOFD already has to pay for its exorbitant employee benefits. In our current economy the last thing we need is waste of our taxpayer money.

If you object to this waste of our money, send an e-mail to the Fire Chief expressing your disapproval and asking that he pass it on to all of the Board of Directors of the MOFD. Send it to rbradley@mofd.org.

Clyde Vaughn
Orinda

Editor:

Moraga/Orinda Fire District Board Scams Taxpayers Again

The focus for MOFD should be (a) emergency services and (b) paying off the huge underfunded liability problem Directors have created for taxpayers. Instead, the Directors plan to use money dedicated to rebuild St. Stephens Station in Orinda, as a Christmas present for the owner of a burned out Moraga building. The Directors approved the purchase of this 9,000 sq. ft. building which has been vacant for 2 years to house 12 Administrative MOFD staffers. The cost to taxpayers is \$2.2 million.

If Directors did not want to spend the \$2.2 million on their emergency services priority, they should have spent the money to pay down the huge underfunded liability problem.

The Directors give their reasons for going into the speculative commercial real estate business.

1. Directors believe it is a good time to buy because prices are low, and the building will appreciate \$60,000 per year.

Fact: Prices are now where they would have been without artificial Federal interference and manipulation. There is no justification to speculate on \$60,000 annual appreciation.

2. Directors believe they can rent the unused space for \$70,000 annually.

Fact: Directors need to look at empty store fronts in Moraga and Rheem.

It is easy for Directors to spend other peoples' money. If they were financially responsible for their decisions they would not throw taxpayer money away on pension spiking, illegal lawsuits, and other financially irresponsible decisions too numerous to mention here.

Orinda taxpayers are on the hook for 65% of MOFD Directors financially irresponsible decisions. It is up to the Orinda City Council to look out for Orinda citizens. Before the Orinda City Council asks voters to approve a road bond, they should detach from MOFD. An Orinda Fire District would save tax payers money that could be spent on Orinda roads.

Bruce Nicolai
Orinda

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