

Surprise Resignations from MOFD Board

By Lucy Amaral

At the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Director's meeting on February 15, two members unexpectedly resigned their positions on the Board. In separate actions, Brook Mancinelli and Richard Olsen tendered their resignation, both effective February 29, 2012.

Olsen represents Division 3, which encompasses portions of Moraga, Orinda and Canyon, and has been on the MOFD Board since March of 2010. Olsen was appointed by the Board to replace Pete Wilson, who resigned due to health reasons, then ran and was reelected to the Board for a four-year term in November, 2010. Mancinelli was elected in November, 2008 and represents Division 5 in Orinda. His term was set to end in November of 2012.

"This is one of the hardest things I have ever done," Mancinelli told the Board. "This will be my last meeting. I am tendering my resignation effective February 29, 2012." Mancinelli gave no comments during the meeting as to why he resigned, nor gave any specific reason when asked later.

After requesting to speak last, Olsen told the Board that he had sadly come to a similar conclusion; however he was more vocal about the reasoning behind his resignation. Olsen said he felt the Board has become dysfunctional. "We have been working at cross purposes," Olsen said in a prepared statement. "As a result, little of significance has been accom-

plished." Olsen added that he felt he could better serve the interests of the community and taxpayers by speaking out publicly, without constraints.

Olsen went on to say that he had hoped that before joining the Board he could affect change by being on the inside. "After two years on this Board," he said. "I am totally frustrated – as I have not been able to effect any significant, positive changes."

Fred Weil complemented both outgoing members for their ability to bring useful perspective to the board and said he was unhappy about this turn of events. "I'm disappointed. They are both intelligent people and mean well for the District," Weil said later. "I am sorry they are not going to participate. I like them both and I respect them both." Weil added that he did receive a pre-meeting call from Mancinelli regarding the resignation.

Board members Frank Sperling and John Wyro echoed Weil's comments regarding the loss of different perspectives, however Wyro also emphasized that while the perspectives might have been different, everyone (on the Board) has worked hard on behalf of the community.

MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley later admitted to being caught off guard. "Although I had a sense that they were not always pleased with some of the actions by the Board, I was surprised that they resigned," said Bradley.

The meeting ended with the

Board instructing MOFD's legal counsel and Chief Bradley to provide information on how to fill these positions. The Board meets again on Wednesday, March 7 and the subject will be placed on the agenda.

Weil said he is hopeful that whoever takes their place will have the best interest of the District and community. "What we provide is so important," he said. "We run a fire and emergency service and whoever joins the Board will focus on helping to set policy that will preserve and enhance our services. That is our (the Board's) job."



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 at the Moraga Library Community Room, 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga.
Next meeting:
Next regular MOFD Board meeting March 7, 2012 7:00 pm at the Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Road
 (go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for more information)

MOFD Board Renews Chief's Contract, Receives Two FEMA Grants

By Lucy Amaral



Mobile Training Tower

Photo provided

At the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Directors meeting held February 15, the Board voted to extend Fire Chief Randy Bradley's Contract and accepted two FEMA grants for training, EMS, safety and communications equipment.

Chief Bradley was hired in November 2009 and his original contract extended through November of 2012. This contract extension, approved by a vote of 3 to 2, will be for 19 months. Dissenting votes came from Richard Olsen and Brook Mancinelli. When questioned later as to the reason for the negative vote, both declined to comment.

According to Board President Fred Weil, the unusual length of his contract is to align the Chief's next contract discussion with the standard

budgeting process. The new contract is set to end on June 30, 2014.

"In my opinion, the Chief earned the extension," said Weil. (With regards to MOFD's budget.) There were tough decisions to make and he made them. Although he found ways to cut operating costs, he did so without reducing services." Weil went on to say Bradley is not afraid to explore new ideas and feels he communicates well with community members.

The Fire District has also been awarded two grants through FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program. The first grant presented was for the purchase of equipment including a Mobile Training Tower, two CPR compression devices and seven Rad 57 Co-Oximeters, a non-invasive unit that can assess a firefighter's condition, including car-

bon dioxide levels in the blood system. In his staff report, Bradley stated that the total cost for this equipment would be \$292,500. MOFD's matching fund requirement would be ten percent or \$29,250.

The Fire District was also awarded a FEMA AFG for the purchase of portable and mobile radios to help transition into the new East Bay Regional Communication System (EBRCS). According to Bradley, many emergency service providers were using dissimilar devices and varying signals, often making it difficult to communicate between agencies. The EBRCS system, developed by the East Bay Regional Communications System Authority, features an interoperable radio communications system. The FEMA award grant will go toward the purchase of 51 portable radios and 35 mobile radios, including installation. The total cost of the radios is \$464,700. MOFD's matching grant portion would equal 20 percent or \$92,940, with the remainder being funded by the FEMA grant.

The Board had previously approved \$244,000 to go toward the purchase of the portable and mobile radios for the EBRCS system. Now that the grants have been awarded, Bradley requested that the total matching funds required by MOFD for these two grants, \$122,190, be taken from the previously budgeted funds, and the remainder be returned to the Capital Reserve fund.

Planning Commission Weighs Balloons vs. Poles

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KB proposes using commercial grade balloons, three to five feet in diameter with pennant tape to illustrate roof lines, along with staking the building perimeter. The big wildcard is the weather—if it's too windy, it's not going to work.

"After researching how to erect story poles, KB Home has determined that traditional methods are both unsafe and impractical for Town Center Phase III," said Bennett in a letter to the Planning Department. The site is surrounded by buildings and the poles could fall over, possibly causing injury or damage. The balloons, coupled with sophisticated photo simulations, KB feels, will adequately illustrate the height, bulk and mass of the proposed project.

While the Planning Commission will still have design input into the project, the City Council has substantially vetted the project through a number of hearings and generally agreed upon the bulk and mass, said Sinnette. Heller Manus, the architect of the project, has already made some substantial changes after receiving feedback. The proposed project will be approximately as tall as the adjacent shingled apartments.

This proposed development is the remaining third of a deal the City made with Lafayette Town Center Associates to redevelop almost five acres downtown more than a dozen years ago. Phases I and II were built, but there was a conflict about Town Center III. The City entered into a

Settlement Agreement to resolve a dispute in May of 2006 about the Development Agreement signed years earlier.

Public hearings are slated to begin soon and the required California Environmental Quality Act review, better known as CEQA is almost complete – an analysis of environmental impacts and mitigation plans.

Planning Commissioners weren't completely sold on the duration of the balloon concept, especially KB's proposal to have the balloons up for only one day for viewing. No decision was made on balloons versus poles at the meeting. Instead a decision was continued until a future Planning Commission meeting, probably March 19, 2012.

Civic News Lafayette

Going, Going, Gone

Abandoned home on Condit Road demolished

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Cathy Tyson

A property on the corner of Condit Road and Pleasant Hill Road that had long been an eyesore has been razed. A crew with heavy equipment and dumpsters demolished and filled in the pool and completely removed the structure. The property that once housed the troublesome residence and potentially dangerous backyard pool will be listed for sale as vacant land with Coldwell Banker. A representative with the Walnut Creek Coldwell Banker office said they are anxious to get it on the market and get it sold.

Having been foreclosed upon some time ago, the partially remodeled home continued to deteriorate as first the owner of record, then Countrywide Mortgage, then Bank of America disputed ownership. Neighbors were concerned as area teens used the empty home as a hang out spot. The City of Lafayette slapped a lien on the property to pay for abatement fees and fines for the continual repair of the fence and removal of dead bushes. In limbo since 2007, neighbors were surely pleased to see the wrecking crew work their magic.

Jazz Pianists Rock the House



Senior concert at the Library

Photo Cathy Tyson

The best place in town on a recent glorious Friday afternoon was the Lafayette Library and Learning Center for fantastic performances by pianists from the Contra Costa Performing Arts Society.

The expansive Community Hall was packed with mostly older residents who enjoyed beautiful music from eight pianists playing a variety of jazz pieces on the Library's Steinway Grand Piano. Sponsored by the Lafayette Senior Services Center, this

musical outing is a terrific opportunity to be a part of the community, visit with friends and neighbors, and nibble at the substantial "light" refreshments compliments of The Chateaus Independent and Assisted Living facilities.

Attendees thoroughly enjoyed the concert, and just like the promotional piece said, left with a song in their hearts. Look for the next program at the Library on Friday, April 20, at 1:30 p.m. C. Tyson

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. **Send a letter to the editor:** letters@lamorindaweekly.com

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