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MOFD Board Considers New Option to House Administrative Staff

By Lucy Amaral

The Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Directors once again revisited the concept of consolidating its administrative staff into one building and renovating Station 41 in Moraga. At the April 18 Board of Director's meeting, Fire Chief Randy Bradley noted several options that had been discussed before, then ended up recommending a new option.

A facilities report approved by the MOFD Board in April, 2011 cited the need to retrofit Station 41 in order to bring it up to ADA standards. The report also addressed administrative staff needs. Currently MOFD staff is split between two fire stations: 41 in Moraga and 45 in Orinda. The report said that combining the currently split administrative offices would allow for an economy of scale, saving the District money while increasing efficiency. The Board had considered a wide range of office locations including renting space for the City of Orinda, renting from a private building owner and purchasing and renovating an existing building. All of the options were eventually shelved. Bradley's staff report discussed the previous choices as a review, however this time he recommended the purchase of a modular building which would be located directly behind Station 41. By using a modular structure of approximately 1,000 square feet, Bradley said the two offices could be combined, Station 41 could be updated without a major renovation, and the operating budget would not be affected as funds would come from the Capital Fund budget (fire flow tax). Bradley added that he has spoken with the current project manager for the reconstruction of Station 43 in Orinda regarding the possibility of taking on this project as well.

"We are trying to find what would work best with regards to our budget and our logistics," Bradley said. He added that he believes the project could be completed for \$150,000 and would cover needed improvements in order to blend with the Moraga Scenic Corridor requirements.

Board members Frank Sperling and John Wyro were hesitant to approve a modular unit until more information was presented and understood how this building would blend into the long-range strategic plan. Board President Fred Weil said he wanted to move the process along and find an economical option that would not impact MOFD's level of service. "This is cheaper than any other alternative that has come before us," he said. "We need to give the Chief what he needs to consolidate staff in one place and to reduce the cost of administration as best we can. "

Orinda's Mayor, Victoria Smith, and Vice Mayor, Amy Worth were in attendance that night and made an appeal for the MOFD Board to reconsider leasing space in Orinda City Hall. "We would really like to have you there," Smith said. "Having your administrative staff (housed in Orinda) would allow us to create a public safety floor. It makes a lot of sense, having police, emergency communications systems (and MOFD) located there." Both Smith and Worth stated they were willing to work with MOFD regarding the lease length and vetting any concerns the District might have. The Board instructed Bradley to return to the next Board meeting with a site and space plan for the modular units as well as a detail cost estimate. The Board also requested that Bradley keep the idea of leasing space from the City of Orinda on the table. However, Weil finished the conversation by stating that the financial aspect would be key. "I would like to find as low cost a solution as possible," he said.

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