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## MOFD Considers Restructuring Fire Marshal Position

*By Lucy Amaral*

The sudden announcement of the retirement of Moraga Orinda Fire District Fire Marshal Mike Mentink at the end of March has afforded Fire Chief Randy Bradley the opportunity to look at ways the District can continue to streamline its administration without compromising service. At the April 18 Board of Director's meeting Bradley presented the Board with an option.

In his report Bradley asked the Board not to fill Mentink's former position noting that, according to the health and safety code, the Fire Chief is the designated Fire Marshal for the District. Bradley suggested that the Board eliminate the positions of Fire Marshal and Fire Prevention Officer and create a new position of Assistant Fire Marshal. The move, he said, would help to produce a balanced financial plan with no impact on service levels.

Mentink had been with MOFD since 2008 and his duties included fire prevention, public relations and fire investigation. Bradley said that when looking at the job responsibilities of the Fire Marshal, Fire Prevention Officer and his position as Fire Chief there were many similarities and overlapping responsibilities. Eliminating the two positions and bringing on an Assistant Fire Marshal would result in a reduction of \$145,000 in total salary and benefit costs.

"This arrangement is not built to be a permanent solution," Bradley said. "When the economic environment improves, I fully expect a full time Fire Marshal would be hired and the Assistant Fire Marshal position would most likely be dissolved." He added that the Assistant Fire Marshal at that time might move into the Fire Marshal position. Bradley said that because Mentink only gave a one-week notice, the current Fire Prevention Officer, Kathy Leonard, took over many of the Fire Marshal's duties and suggested to the Board that she is the best qualified to move into the role of Assistant Fire Marshal.

Questions from the Board focused mainly on the vagueness of the new position's job description as presented, and how fire districts compare salaries. The Board agreed, however, that a decision should be made quickly and instructed Bradley to return with a re-edited job description and a clear salary matrix.

A common theme from both the Board and the public comments dealt with concerns about the quality of service.

"We want to make sure services don't fall through the cracks," Board member Frank Sperling said regarding his request for more details from the Chief. "We are looking for additional information to ensure that the Board, and the community, understands how this move will be better while still offering the same level of service."

The Board plans to meet again in early May to deliberate and possibly approve the position.

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