

Evans Brings FAIR Perspective to MOFD Board

By Nick Marnell

Drawing attention to a massive binder filled with Moraga Orinda Fire District charts, data and reports, Alex Evans said, "I've done (data analysis) all of my life. But I do not understand what is in there."

Evans, one of two newly appointed members of the MOFD Board of Directors, has been involved with the public for most of his adult life. His MBA from the University of Michigan is in Public Policy. He founded EMC Research in 1989, a company specializing in market and opinion research, and has served in the past as a member of the Richmond City Council and Orinda's Citizens for Infrastructure Oversight Committee. Evans was also a founding member of FAIR (Fire And Infrastructure Renewal), a group of Orinda citizens who believe that MOFD is not being equitably funded by both Orinda and Moraga, and wonder if efficiencies can be found that might somehow free up Orinda property tax dollars to fix roads and infrastructure.

"It is unacceptable that some of the people in Orinda think that they are overpaying for their services," Evans stated. When asked if he is one of those people, he responded, "Fire service is typically 15 percent of a municipality's budget. The amount of Orinda property taxes allocated to

MOFD is equal to the budget of the City of Orinda."

Evans made it clear that he joined the MOFD board because he wants the entity to thrive, to continue to be supported by the public, and to emerge financially sound. "I want the MOFD to be sustainable, and to exist into perpetuity," he said.

Nothing appears to be off the table, though. Evans indicated that if it is confirmed that the firefighting costs borne by Orinda are too high relative to other agencies, if Orinda is paying more than it should for its fire service, and if it's shown that Orinda could provide its own service more cheaply, the dissolution of the MOFD could happen. "But that is not my goal," he said.

He believes the most immediate pressing issue facing MOFD is the labor situation. "The labor contract is our number one priority," he explained.

Evans is a complex man, dealing with complex issues. He appears ready to take on all the challenges, and ready to challenge all assumptions. Having spent his career churning data, it will be interesting to see what recommendations he comes up with after he parses all of the data that is in that binder. "It's going to take time," he said.

Anderson Focuses on MOFD Finances

By Nick Marnell

Steve Anderson, newly sworn in as a member of the Moraga Orinda Fire District Board of Directors, is not one to mince words. "Details! You have to know and understand what is going on. You need to learn exactly how a business operates."

Anderson was born in Florida and is a Florida Gator through and through. He earned both his bachelor's degree and his MBA in Gainesville. He began his career in Texas, at EDS, working for Ross Perot. His wife, whom he met while he was in the service, is from California and 30 years ago they moved to Orinda. Anderson has formed and sold tech companies over the years, and continues to act as a consultant for four of them. "I'm their adult presence," he said.

"My first interaction with the MOFD was a positive one," Anderson recalled. He needed insurance work done for one of the properties he owned, and he was happy with the knowledge and professionalism of the department.

Why did he decide to seek a seat on the board? "I want my tax dollars managed frugally," Anderson replied. He remembers watching a

presentation that was made to the Orinda City Council by a citizens' group claiming that if MOFD funds were properly assessed and allocated there might be money that could be used to fix Orinda roads. This idea made him curious about MOFD and motivated him to throw his hat in the ring. Like many in Orinda, "I want to fix our roads," he stated vehemently.

"I intend to find out exactly how this entity operates," Anderson continued. "I want to know how the first dollar is spent. I will insist on an explanation for every expenditure in the financial plan." He also intends to demand an explanation for every assumption used in formulating that financial plan. Including the actual amount of pension liability, which he said has been puzzlingly unavailable from Contra Costa County Employees' Retirement Association. "I don't know" is not an acceptable answer," he said.

Anderson represents MOFD District Three, the seat vacated by Dick Olsen who resigned in February. Stepping down is not on his agenda. "I was a Ranger in the service, Nick. We're the first ones in. And we finish the job."

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The Changing of the Guard

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What pleases him most, though, is that "the conduct of city affairs was undertaken in an open and transparent fashion with civility to all."

The past year, Glazer said, has been exhilarating and productive in other ways as well. "We saw our youngest child off to college. I have faced difficult decisions in ensuring an affordable and accessible higher education [for California's children] as a Trustee of the California State Universities. I have enjoyed working with Governor Brown to stabilize state funding for schools and public safety through the passage of Proposition 30." And his campaign for reelection to the city council was also successful.

When asked what Orinda will look like five years from now - particularly in light of the community's current divisiveness over downtown development - he said he doesn't "expect the downtown to change significantly in the years ahead. The city would benefit from efforts by

downtown property owners to improve their buildings. More residential housing in our central core can be a positive if done in the right way. Any proposed project will undergo intense public scrutiny and will only be approved if there is a broad consensus that it meets our standards and values."

Glazer's life in the political arena will continue via his service on the CSU Board of Trustees. He will also "work with Governor Brown on ways to stimulate economic development and job creation," as well as "with community groups to protect and improve our environment in Orinda and throughout the Bay Area."

In closing Glazer said, "Our council's collegiality has made this year's accomplishments all the better. I am lucky to have such a wonderful group of council members in which to work on city matters. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as mayor of this city I love so much."

New MOFD Board Hits the Ground Running Approves sending Station 43 project out to bid

By Nick Marnell

Alex Evans and Steve Anderson were sworn in last week as the two newest members of the Moraga Orinda Fire District Board of Directors. Since they ran unopposed, Evans and Anderson were appointed in lieu of election. Anderson represents District 3, which includes sections of Orinda, Canyon and Moraga. Evans is from District 5 in Orinda. Board president Fred Weil, who also ran unchallenged, was sworn in as well.

After a brief celebration with family and friends the new board started working through a very long agenda that included, among other things, incident reports, the 2011-12 financial audit and Station 43.

"This was my most challenging day as fire chief," stated a visibly shaken Randall Bradley, referring to Dec. 2 when a multi-vehicle accident on Highway 24 resulted in serious injuries to three of his firefighters. Bradley told the board that all procedures were properly followed during the incident, but he also vowed that he was going to look again at everything, all of the policies and procedures, to be sure that something like this does not happen again. The firefighters will return to work. "Two of them, it may take a while. But they'll be back," said Bradley.

A representative of the Cropper Accountancy Corporation gave a presentation on the audit of the district's 2011-2012 financials. Evans and Anderson appeared frustrated by the findings, specifically, that the true liabilities of the pension and other post-employment benefit obligations were not stated. The auditor explained that government standards do not require that and quickly wrapped things up by calling it a "clean audit."

A debate about seeking bids for the construction of a new and improved Station 43 turned out to be the most interesting feature of the evening. In 2011 the board determined that Station 43 needs to be replaced because it does not meet seismic standards, modern fire equipment does not fit in the apparatus bays, and the living area does not adequately accommodate mixed gender staffing.

Weil opened the discussion by ex-

pressing the need to start the formal bidding process. Anderson wanted to know if the board could even authorize the work before they read the finalized financials. What if they discovered that they couldn't afford it? Evans agreed. Other members wanted to secure the bids and see how things fell into place.

Steve Meyers, MOFD attorney, cautioned that responding to bid requests is a time consuming process and companies expect that the request is made in good faith. "It's not to be a fishing expedition," he said.

Bradley was in favor of putting out the bids. "We need this structure to be safe for our employees," he said. "It must be redone, and brought to earthquake standards. It's one of the costs of doing business for a fire department."

Board member John Wyro said that due to all of the construction now going on in Walnut Creek costs are only going to go up because of demand, which would result in this project becoming even more expensive if delayed. Board member Frank Sperling countered that all of that new construction should mean more revenue down the road, so they could afford to wait.

Finally, Weil stated that the request for bids was a top priority and they ought to approve the request. "If the number doesn't come in, we're

going to have to do something else," said Weil who then called for a vote.

On a 3-2 vote the board agreed to request bids, with Anderson and Evans dissenting.

The board broke for a closed session on labor negotiations. "No action was taken," said Weil. "It was simply an update on the status of negotiations for the new board members." Vince Wells, president of Local 1230, added, "We're scheduled to get back to negotiations in February."

The next regular meeting of the board was rescheduled from Jan. 2 to Jan. 9, 2013.



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. Please note new meeting location: Orinda Community Center, Founders Auditorium, 28 Orinda Way

Next meeting:
Regular Board Meeting
Jan. 9, 2013, 7 p.m.
(go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for more information)

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