

MOFD Board Dispatches Task Force Report

Approves the hiring of six firefighters

By Nick Marnell

3The patience of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors appeared to be tested at a meeting in early January.

The Orinda Citizens Emergency Services Task Force, a group of residents investigating MOFD's management and fiscal policies, submitted a document titled "Report to the Community on the State of Emergency Services" to the Orinda City Council in September, 2012. That same month, the MOFD board directed its staff to provide an analysis of the report.

Fire Chief Randall Bradley addressed each of the report's observations and recommendations at the MOFD board meeting Jan. 9.

The report assailed the district's emergency response times. "Response times will always be an issue," Bradley said. "We will never meet national standards. We are a rural environment, and they are looking for us to maintain suburban service levels. It's not possible." The report recommended against replacing Station 43, but Bradley insisted that the station, which is over 60 years old and does not meet seismic, space, gender, or firefighter health and safety requirements, needs to be replaced. Bradley also decried what he described as the use of flawed methodology in the report, which stated that the district has close to a \$700 million pension liability.

"I read the entire 90-page report. Twice," said director Fred Weil, noting that, as an attorney, he has "great admiration for people who pull together arguments." But he declared the report to be "fundamentally flawed. It's a polemic." As to one of the report's basic premises, that Orinda is paying too much for its emergency services, he stated, "In fact, a lot more money has been spent in Orinda than in Moraga."

The report frustrated board president Frank Sperling, who said that the Task Force "continues to perpetrate a false picture to the community. I was hoping to hear new ideas, but there were none to be found." Director John Wyro put an end to the lengthy discussion. "It's time to move on," he said. "We've got work to do." No further action was taken.

Directors Alex Evans and Steve Anderson, both Orinda residents, maintained near silence throughout the Task Force report discussion.

Task Force member Steve Cohn said later, "After (the) dismissal of our concerns regarding service in Orinda, equitable funding by Orinda's taxpayers... and MOFD's long term finan-

cial stability, we are not sure what else there is for us to do."

There was indeed other work for the board to do. Despite the closure of Lafayette Fire Station 16, and the mutual aid agreement that MOFD has with the Contra Costa Fire Protection District, Bradley assured the board that the MOFD need change nothing operationally as a result, partly because Lafayette gave more aid to the MOFD than the other way around.

Vince Wells, president of Local 1230 representing firefighters, reminded the board, "You need good relationships with the other agencies. We all share the burden" of saving lives. And Dick Olsen, past MOFD board member, tried to assure the board that history has shown there will not be a problem with the two districts working together.

As a result of a December accident on Highway 24, and the consequent long-term disability of three firefighters, plus the retirement of three firefighters coming within the next few months, Bradley said that there is mounting pressure being felt by his staff. Firefighters receive "mandatory" overtime – they are required to work even when they turn down overtime – but, Bradley explained, mandatory overtime can have an impact on family life and also on the firefighters' health and safety. To partially ameliorate these issues, Bradley requested approval to hire six firefighter/paramedics. Once the new hires are made, the department will still have nine open positions.

No resistance to Bradley's request was offered. The board unanimously approved the hiring of the six firefighters. The hirings will be finalized on or about March 1.

The next scheduled meeting of the MOFD board is Jan. 16.



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. 16, 2013, 7 p.m.

(go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for more information)

Congressman George Miller Visits Moraga



George Miller and Dave Trotter

Photo Andy Scheck

On a break from Washington, 11th District Congressman George Miller came to the Jan. 11 Liaison meeting to take Moraga's pulse.

Miller was updated about the local sales tax increase, resulting infrastructure work, service club fundraising as well as about the Moraga Education

Foundation, which is well on its way to raising more than \$2 million, and the passage of Prop. 30 and the little breathing room it will give to schools. Miller is new to Moraga because of redistricting but has served California for 20 years. "I like to go where people are and try to meet them on Main Street, and in small businesses to find out what works and what is not working," he said. "In Washington we have a lot to do, our budget has been devastated, but there is an upbeat feeling about California." Miller serves on the education committee where he hopes he will be able to work on some compromises he feels the nation needs. *S. Braccini*

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Looking forward to working with you in in the New Year.

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Consultant to Investigate Highway 24 Accident

MOFD Fire Chief Randall Bradley gave the board an update on the conditions of his three injured firefighters who were involved in an accident on Highway 24 in December, 2012.

"I can say that all three are in good spirits and we do expect all to have full recoveries and to return to work," he said. "I do not want to speculate on timeframes."

Kelly Morris sustained a fractured right foot, a fractured right leg and a left knee injury. She is at home recovering from her injuries. Steve Rogness required reconstructive surgery on his right foot and also injured his right knee, which may require surgery at a later date. Rogness is also recuperating at home. Mike Rattary continues to recover from the symptoms of a significant concussion.

Bradley hired a consulting firm, John Sharry and Associates in Discovery Bay, to investigate the accident. Sharry was the fire chief of Lawrence Livermore Laboratories in the early '90s. The consulting contract was signed the week of Jan. 7. The contract specifies a rate of \$125 per hour, up to an 80-hour maximum. Since the contract did not exceed Bradley's \$10,000 spending authority, no board approval was required for this action. *N. Marnell*

TODAY'S FOOD WASTE. TOMORROW'S POWER.

The **Food Recycling Project** converts commercially produced food waste into clean, renewable energy. By choosing to dine and shop at participating Central Contra Costa restaurants and businesses, you are helping to protect our environment.

We would like to thank new and ongoing participants of the Food Recycling Project.

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- Moraga:** Aegis of Moraga • Asia Palace • Basil Asian Restaurant • Berg Senior Services • Bianca's Deli & Catering • Camino Pablo School • Chef Chao Fine Chinese Cuisine • Joaquin Moraga School • Kirin Sushi • Lamorinda Pizza • Pho Little Hearty Noodle • Moraga Produce • Mountain Mike's Pizza • Ranch House Café • Rheem Elementary • Ristorante Amoroma • Rheem Elementary • Royal Siam • Saint Mary's College • Shish Kabab Show • Terzetto Cuisine
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