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**From Front Page**

**Adobe Deal Sealed**

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Visitors to the Moraga Adobe feel a sense of history oozing from the grass and old trees and surrounding one of Contra Costa County's oldest historic structures. Completed in the 1840s by Joaquin Moraga, the adobe was restored in 1941 by Katharine Brown White Irvine, widow of James Irvine and a member of the James Irvine Foundation's first Board of Directors. Photo Ohlen Alexander

As part of the \$500,000 purchase price, FJMA will "pay up to one-half of the cost of restoration of the adobe to its original 1840's configuration and preparation of the site for public access as a museum and history learning center," and will also establish "a fund for ongoing maintenance and operation," said FJMA representatives. J & J will cover the remaining half of the restoration costs, according to the firm's president, Matt Branagh. J & J's Michael Olsen, who praised the decorum of negotiations, observed that finalization of the deal simply came down to having an official group to help bring things together, adding that the agreement "concluded to the benefit of us all."

Additional terms released at the press conference stipulate that the learning center will be open to the public up to 30 days each year, and that FJMA will have up to three years from the day on which the Orinda city council approves revised plans for the J & J project to complete its payment to J & J. If FJMA is unable to raise the necessary funds, ownership of the adobe will pass to the J & J Ranch homeowner's association for likely operation as the private Adobe Community Clubhouse described in prior planning documents - but at least ensuring that the adobe would still be preserved and maintained for future generations.

As a result, J & J must now submit updated plans to the planning commission, explained Ursu. "After we receive revised plans the environmental review process will start. According to the draft schedule prepared by our CEQA [California Environmental Quality Act] consultant on the project, it will take approximately nine months to prepare an EIR [Environmental Impact Report] for the project. Planning commission hearings will likely not be held until early 2014." Ursu added that the city council authorized staff to retain the consulting firm of Lamphier Gregory to prepare the EIR.

Regarding work on the actual historic structure, said Ursu, "The developer may submit a plan to restore the adobe with its subdivision application or it may submit a restoration plan separately after the subdivision application is considered."

The members of Protect Adobe Lane (PAL), an advocacy group concerned about the environmental impact of both renovation and future operations on site, plan to follow the city's review process closely.

FJMA president Kent Long thanked the Orinda city council and Moraga town council for their support, and hinted at additional events to come as he brought to mind grand celebrations with music and dance once held on the adobe grounds. "We'd like to tap into that tradition," he said of plans to host FJMA's first fandango and fundraiser. More information will be available on the FJMA website as details are finalized: moragaadobe.org.

Moraga's mayor, Dave Trotter, expressed confidence that the communities of Moraga and Orinda will come together to raise the funds needed to make the adobe's restoration happen.

Lance Beeson, a direct descendant of the Moraga family, added, "It's time that this property becomes part of the public. ... It is the founding structure of the entire valley."

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**Lamorinda Fire News Briefs**

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"You're leaving too soon," said Commissioner Ed Haynes as the board recognized Louder's October retirement. Commissioner Barry Cunningham complained that the chief had been poorly portrayed by the media. "You shouldn't have been criticized for doing your job, since so many of your tools were taken away," said Cunningham.

**Fitch & Associates**

Financial issues have plagued the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, forcing it to consider options for providing fire service. Property tax revenue has dropped, and a district parcel tax ballot measure did not pass in 2012. The message is clear from the taxpayers: they will not increase their contributions to fund ConFire, station closures or not.

Faced with the reality of these fiscal limitations, the Board of Supervisors recently authorized Fitch and Associates, a Platte City, Mo. public service consulting company, to conduct an evaluation of ConFire operations. The company will analyze all aspects of the fire agency, including fire suppression, prevention and disaster response, and will recommend options for a more efficient fire service model. The project is expected to be complete in January 2014.

This is the third contract with Fitch and Associates the board of supervisors has authorized in the past 18 months. In October 2011, a \$95,000 contract was awarded to evaluate and identify potential new funding sources for the county's Emergency Medical Services. An additional \$198,500

was contracted in December to conduct a study for the county's EMS Modernization Project. And the fire district evaluation contract is \$170,000; that cost will be borne by the county, not ConFire, according to Jackie Lorrekovich, ConFire's chief of administrative services.

**Canyon Multi-Agency Wildfire Meeting**

Townpeople and officials gathered at Canyon Elementary School on April 10 to explore the challenges that a major wildfire presents to both the community and the fire agencies.

Lamorinda Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein described how a major disaster was averted during a wildfire in an isolated southern California community similar to Canyon, thanks to cooperation between residents and the fire agencies. Contra Costa County District 2 Supervisor Candace Andersen discussed emergency preparedness planning. And Moraga-Orinda Fire District division chief Stephen Healy detailed how residents can coordinate an evacuation, including the use of Reverse 911, and PulsePoint, a free smartphone app that lets users view emergency activity as it is happening.

Healy emphasized a life-saving basic: "When we say evacuate - please go!"

"There are things that you can do to save your home," said MOFD fire chief Randall Bradley. He challenged the community to take him up on an offer to have the MOFD conduct a free fire prevention assessment of their properties.

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