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46 is Eighty-Sixed

By Nick Marnell

Before a stunned audience at the May 15 Moraga-Orinda Fire District board meeting, Director Steve Anderson switched his earlier pro-46 position and voted to immediately terminate the sales contract for the district's purchase of the Lafayette property it had planned to use for a proposed fire station 46. As a result, the MOFD board voted 3-2 in favor of termination, with directors Alex Evans and John Wyro dissenting. The district will forfeit a \$15,000 non-refundable deposit on the property.

On May 14, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors also voted to halt negotiations between the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District and MOFD to jointly purchase and operate station 46.

"I was in favor of this deal because it made sense financially," said Anderson. "But it is no longer attractive. I don't see ConFire as ever being a viable partner, and I am not willing to roll the dice on a real estate deal."

Director John Wyro argued that the district was losing out on a terrific opportunity. "We should buy this property and wait for a partner (to replace ConFire). The reward will be well worth the effort," he said, referring to the potential savings of operational expenses.

Anderson reiterated his support for a Lamorinda Fire District. "But if Lafayette wants to be our partner, they need to step up," he said.

Lafayette Vice Mayor Don Tatzin, also a member of the Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission, cautioned the board that the detachment of Lafayette from ConFire and annexation into MOFD would not be automatic. "The LAFCO process is not fast, and the outcome is not guaranteed," he said.

"A Lamorinda Fire District is worthy of exploration, regardless of 46," said Director Frank Sperling, in his final appearance as board president. He was formally recognized for his seven years of service on the MOFD board of directors.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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