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## Everyone Still Not on Board

By Nick Marnell

At a recent meeting of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, Fire Chief Randall Bradley presented a draft of the deal points for the joint purchase and operation of a proposed fire station 46 with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. The MOFD board wanted clarification on some of the negotiated terms in the draft of the deal points, and the ensuing discussion took nearly two hours.

One of the terms stated that the district may not pursue or initiate annexation of Lafayette into MOFD, which was unacceptable to director Fred Weil. He explained that, should Lafayette pass a resolution that it wanted to be annexed into the district, the word "pursue" would prevent the MOFD from moving along the path of annexation. "It's one thing to say we won't initiate," said Weil. "It's another thing to say that we won't 'pursue.'"

"Just remove the word," suggested board president Frank Sperling.

Bradley cautioned the board: "Based on my negotiations with ConFire, without that piece, I don't think we would have an agreement."

Weil also asked for a "maintenance of effort" clause to be added to the document. "If ConFire pays for 46 by degrading service to station 17, this becomes a bad deal for us," said Weil. Bradley said that there was no way he could negotiate a deal that required another jurisdiction to keep all service levels the same for the next 40 years. "We couldn't make that same promise," he said.

The proposed staffing structure of the new station was discussed. ConFire's model calls for one paramedic in each three-person company; MOFD is migrating toward a full firefighter-paramedic district, according to Bradley, who said that ConFire was unwilling to pay for half the cost of a full paramedic company. "So, in order to get equal cost sharing, we must use their model, and not ours?" asked Weil.

"They have not agreed to pay for three full-time paramedic-firefighters," responded Bradley.

Not specifically addressed in the draft was that, in the event of a Red Flag emergency, the district will have the right to first call the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, not ConFire, for backup. "Our first option will always be CAL FIRE, because that's free," explained Bradley, who said that he believes ConFire will agree to that procedure, which is followed by the MOFD.

The directors also objected to a clause that implied, should ConFire drop out before completion of the station, the site at 1035 Lorinda Lane in Lafayette would have to be sold even if MOFD did not want to withdraw from the project. "The non-withdrawing agency should have the option to continue," said Sperling.

The directors did not vote on any of the individual discussion items. The only board action taken was a motion for staff to release the remaining \$7,500 deposit to the seller of the Lorinda Lane property, to continue to spend district funds for due diligence on the property, and to address and clarify with ConFire the areas of concern in the draft of deal points so that a joint powers agreement can be finalized.

As they did on the previous motion involving proposed station 46, directors John Wyro, Steve Anderson and Alex Evans voted yes; Weil and Sperling voted no.

The MOFD board of directors will reconvene on May 8.

(The board of supervisors met on May 7, after our press deadline. Check our website at [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com) for the latest developments.)

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