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## Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force

Deep into the night of June 10 - actually, at 12:40 a.m. June 11 - and with the support of a handful of concerned Lafayette residents who stayed til the wee hours to voice their opinions, the Lafayette City Council voted unanimously to create the 2013 Emergency Services Task Force; its mission to analyze the delivery of fire and emergency medical services to Lafayette residents. It is expected to deliver a preliminary report by Sept. 30. "One-third of the city has no fire service, and that is unacceptable," said Councilmember Brandt Andersson. The Board of Supervisors closed Lafayette's fire station 16 and has no plans to reopen it in the near future. When the board also rejected the station 46 consolidation plan between the county and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, the city decided to investigate fire service alternatives, including possible annexation into MOFD. ConFire Advisory Board member Bill Granados made a plea to the City Council on behalf of the fire district. "We want to help. We're not going to give up on you," he said. "We didn't drop the ball; four supervisors did that...What you're doing tonight may open their eyes." The task force will be comprised of five to seven volunteers, likely including council members Andersson and Traci Reilly.

New President for MOFD Board

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board of directors elected John Wyro as its president to fill the term of Frank Sperling, who resigned on May 24. The board will consider conducting a special election to fill Sperling's vacant seat; Sperling represented Division 1 in Moraga.

Testy Board of Supervisors

An angry and frustrated Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors fired back at its June 4 meeting over the public's refusal to accept the dire financial condition of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. Because of budget cuts, the district is faced with another fire station closure in July and one more in January; this after the closing of two other stations in 2012, including Lafayette's station 16.

Firefighters stood along the chamber walls and cheered as ConFire Battalion Chief Ben Smith attacked the board for not finding the money to help rebuild the district. "I know you didn't create these problems, but you refuse to make the hard choices," he said. "You've left us with a ramshackle of a fire department.

"Find the money. We cannot close another fire station."

Supervisor Mary Piepho affirmed that the board is committed to maintaining the safety and service to the community despite the budget cutbacks, but she did not think that the meeting chambers should become a battleground between the supervisors and the union. "We shouldn't be fighting one another," she said. "It's communication with the public that needs to occur."

Vice chair Karen Mitchoff was skeptical. "The public won't believe us until something bad happens," she said. "And then we'll be blamed when that happens."

Since ConFire has been destaffed by nearly one-third, the board agreed that operational changes need to be made, with the safety of the firefighters of paramount importance. It directed Fire Chief Daryl Louder and staff to address structural issues - like automatic aid - that might further undermine the limited service that exists in the district.

"We need to serve the district ratepayers first before we go outside our boundaries," said Piepho.

"We've cried out and we've cried out. I'm beyond frustrated," said Mitchoff. "We are telling the public the truth. But they don't want to accept the truth."

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