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Bradley Headed Home

By Nick Marnell

When Moraga-Orinda Fire District Fire Chief Randall Bradley announced June 28 that he will take a similar position with the Modesto Regional Fire Authority, he vaulted himself into a public entity serving six times the population of MOFD with nearly double the annual budget, as well as being four times closer to his home in Manteca.

"It's a dream job for me," said Bradley.

Bradley took over MOFD in November 2009, a district reeling from the negative fallout over its handling of the previous fire chief's \$240,000 annual pension. But the one-time pro basketball hopeful said he welcomed the challenge.

"When I arrived," said Bradley, "the downturn in the economy was beginning to impact the community's confidence in the district's long term sustainability."

To help address budget shortfalls, Bradley slimmed down the organization. "I evaluated administrative functions and duties, which led to a reduction of six full time administrative positions," he said. "This effort led to the development of our Long Range Financial Plan, an achievement I am extremely proud of."

Bradley also reignited the 1999 and 2011 failed attempts at a fire station consolidation plan with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. His proposal to build a new fire station 46 at the Lafayette-Orinda border to replace a fire station from each district - potentially saving each district \$1 million in annual operating costs - was turned down by the boards of both districts. Although the proposal is again under consideration, this time by MOFD and the city of Lafayette, within four months both Bradley and ConFire chief Daryl Louder - the driving forces behind the consolidation - will have departed their fire districts.

Bradley's efforts to put together the joint venture impressed both Louder- who praised Bradley's non-traditional thinking - and District 2 Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen. "He has been a great partner with ConFire," said Andersen. "His collaborative, innovative approach to the proposed station 46 is the type of 'thinking outside the box' we need in all of our fire districts."

Bradley's tenure was not without its missteps.

In early 2012, Bradley presented the MOFD board a plan to purchase a building in Moraga to house the district's administrative center. But negative public reaction forced the district to cancel the purchase and lose the \$25,000 deposit it placed on the property.

And in December 2012, three district firefighters were seriously injured while tending to a multi-vehicle accident on State Highway 24. A fire industry consultant recommended operational changes in the district as a result of the procedures followed at the accident scene.

Bradley leaves a district whose firefighters have been working without a contract since 2010 and without a pay raise in five years. Mark DeWeese, the MOFD Local 1230 representative, expressed the frustration of the firefighters' union. "The chief's relationship with the union has had its ups and downs over his time here," he said. "He is leaving with some major issues still unresolved that the union feels should have been taken care of a long time ago." MOFD board president John Wyro appreciated Bradley's efforts on the Long Range Financial Plan, plus his work on the station 46 project. "Chief Bradley served us well, dealing with some very difficult times," said Wyro. "He will be missed."

The Modesto Regional Fire Authority was formed in January 2011 when three Stanislaus County fire agencies entered into a Joint Powers Agreement. The authority is governed by three boards of directors representing the three agencies to whom Bradley will report.

Bradley's final day at MOFD will be July 15.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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