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Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

MOFD Division 1 Board Vacancy

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District voted June 20 to fill Frank Sperling's board seat by appointment, while leaving open the option for a special election if no candidate surfaces. The district must either appoint a director by July 23 - which is 60 days from the date of Sperling's resignation - or call for the special election. If neither action is taken by that date, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors will appoint the director.

"That's not going to happen," said director Steve Anderson.

The compromise motion, proposed by director Alex Evans, passed 3-1; director Fred Weil voted against. Weil strongly opposed the appointment process; he wanted the new director to be chosen only via special election. "I don't think we should be disenfranchising our voters," he said. "Representatives should be chosen by the people who live there."

The job posting for the volunteer position will close July 10. The district will review applications and attempt to appoint a new director by July 17.

No District Tax Increase

At the same meeting, with no discussion and by unanimous vote, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District held its fire flow tax rate to 6 cents per fire risk unit for fiscal year 2013-14.

The fire flow tax is a levy on district property used to augment funding for fire protection, prevention and suppression, or other district needs. The revenue traditionally is appropriated to the district's capital budget. The fire flow tax brought in slightly over \$1 million for the last fiscal year.

A fire risk unit is calculated on a formula based in part on the square footage of an improved property, its construction type and whether it contains an approved sprinkler system. In short, the higher the property's risk of fire attendant to its improvements, the higher the fire risk unit. This number, multiplied by 6 cents, equals the annual fire flow tax on the property.

New MOFD Fire Marshal

The board also unanimously approved a motion to promote assistant fire marshal Kathy Leonard to fire marshal, effective July 1. Randall Bradley, the MOFD fire chief, has been serving as the fire marshal for the past 15 months since the retirement of Mike Mentink.

Bradley said that Leonard had been taking on more and more of the fire marshal duties, which allowed him to focus on other district programs. "Based on Kathy's commitment to the organization, her knowledge of fire prevention programs and the fact that she was working beyond her job classification, she deserved the promotion and I am extremely proud of her," added the chief.

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