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Good News/Bad News

MOFD awarded \$1.1 million; will lose \$100K

By Nick Marnell

The Federal Emergency Management Agency announced July 12 that the Moraga-Orinda Fire District will receive a 2013 SAFER grant of \$1.1 million.

The federal Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Act was created to provide funding to local fire departments and volunteer firefighter organizations to help them increase or maintain the number of trained, "front line" firefighters available in their communities. Outgoing MOFD Fire Chief Randall Bradley said that MOFD will use the funds over a two-year period to fund four firefighter positions.

The district has 60 days to formally accept the award, and according to Bradley, "there is no compelling reason not to accept." Districts have refused the SAFER grant, he said, because after two years, the district must maintain the increased staffing level and the new firefighters cannot be laid off. Bradley added that the addition of four firefighters should save the district well over the \$1.1 million in overtime costs over the two-year period.

The grant request was written by

MOFD battalion chief Jerry Lee.

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District was awarded a \$6.5 million SAFER grant in 2011.

On the downside for the district, the Board of Supervisors recently approved a new funding formula for the disbursement of Measure H funds that will reduce the MOFD's revenue by more than \$100,000 per year beginning in fiscal year 2015-16. The details of the new plan were presented at the board's July 9 meeting by Pat Frost, Contra Costa Health Services EMS Director.

In 1988, voters passed Contra Costa County's Measure H which provided for upgrades to the Emergency Medical Services system. The \$10 parcel tax has been used to support fire-EMS programs, such as providing more paramedic ambulance availability and subsidizing paramedic-staffed fire engines.

The new funding formula changes the paramedic-staffed fire engine funding subsidy from one based on the number of operational fire engines in a district to a formula based on population. Overall funding subsidies to fire districts in Contra Costa

County will increase \$600,000 per year under the new plan. But three fire agencies – MOFD, the Pinole Fire Department and the Rodeo-Hercules Fire District – will see a decrease in their allocations.

MOFD's share of Measure H funding for the current fiscal year is \$199,000; it will drop to \$93,000 in two years.

The top beneficiary of the reallocation is the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District; the Board of Supervisors also functions as ConFire's board of directors. "With the cutbacks in engines subsequent to the fire station closures, (the engine-based formula) was going to hit ConFire extremely hard and reduce their revenues almost by half," said Frost. ConFire's distribution of the Measure H funds will increase more than \$350,000 per year beginning in 2015-16.

MOFD board president John Wyro said that this funding issue will be discussed at a future district board meeting.

Burned-Out Fire District

By Nick Marnell

"I don't have enough revenue to do our job," said a weary Contra Costa County Fire Protection District chief Daryl Louder at the July 9 Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors meeting. Louder had just listened to a presentation by county administrator David Twa who said that, even with the recent closure of a fifth fire station, the district will be bankrupt in two fiscal years without an increase in revenue.

Despite the bleak financial report, Louder made three operational requests of the board: He asked for \$170,000 to staff three 2-person squads to respond to emergency medical calls during the height of the wildfire season; a reduction in automatic aid supplied outside the district; and authorization to renegotiate with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District on a joint fire station 46.

The station 46 consolidation plan was resurrected when the MOFD board voted to renegotiate with the owner of a parcel to be used for a joint fire station which would replace MOFD station 43 in Orinda and ConFire's closed station 16 in Lafayette. "My thanks to MOFD for looking at this once again despite our reluctance to enter into an agreement," said Supervisor Candace Andersen, whose district includes Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda.

Lafayette council member Don Tatzin and city manager Steven Falk also supported the revised ConFire station 46 plan. Though the city recently formed an Emergency Services Task Force to investigate alternative delivery of its fire and emergency medical service, "Lafayette has no appetite for changing fire districts," said

Falk.

Louder's new proposal for the fire station 46 consolidation included a major caveat: that MOFD waive ConFire's portion of the annual operating costs until ConFire's financial situation stabilizes; he said he will request a five-year waiver period. "I think it's a good proposal," said Twa. So did the supervisors, who unanimously passed a motion to allow the chief to renegotiate the deal.

As to whether MOFD also thinks it is a good proposal, board president John Wyro had no comment as he had not seen the new ConFire presentation.

The supervisors unanimously passed a motion to add the three emergency medical squads from mid-July through mid-October, over the objection of the firefighters' union. Vince Wells, president of Local 1230, wanted the money used to reopen ConFire station 87 in Pittsburg, which closed July 8.

Though no motion was passed, the directors also agreed with Louder's proposal that automatic aid to neighboring fire districts be restricted to a hard cap of four ConFire units at one time, with a maximum of two units deployed into any one district at a time.

MOFD fire chief Randall Bradley did not think that this restriction will adversely impact his district. "We have five engines and two ambulances," he said later that day. "With an additional two engines from Lafayette we can handle over 99 percent of our calls. If we need additional resources we can get them from Berkeley and/or Oakland."

MOFD Board Meeting July 15

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board of directors met July 15 after press deadline. The agenda included the appointment of an interim fire chief to replace Randall Bradley; the possible appointment of one of three applicants for the board seat vacated by Frank Sperling; and discussion about entering a joint powers agreement with the city of Lafayette to purchase a property for the construction of the proposed fire station 46. Check our website for updates, www.lamorindaweekly.com.

N. Marnell

11 Critical Home Inspection Traps to be Aware of Weeks Before Listing Your Home for Sale

LAMORINDA - According to industry experts, there are over 33 physical problems that will come under scrutiny during a home inspection when your home is for sale. A new report has been prepared which identifies the eleven most common of these problems, and what you should know about them before you list your home for sale.

Whether you own an old home or a brand new one, there are a number of things that can fall short of requirements during a home inspection. If not identified and dealt with, any of these 11 items could cost you dearly in terms of repair. That's why it's critical that you read this report before you list your home. If you wait until the building inspector flags these issues for you, you will almost certainly experience costly delays in the close of your home sale or, worse, turn prospective buyers away altogether. In most cases, you can make a reasonable pre-inspection yourself if you know what you're looking for, and knowing what you're looking for can help you prevent little problems from growing into costly and unmanageable ones.

To help homesellers deal with this issue before their homes are listed, a free report entitled "11 Things You Need to Know to Pass Your Home Inspection" has been compiled which explains the issues involved.

Visit www.How2PassInspections.com to order a **FREE** Special Report or to hear a brief recorded message about how to order your **FREE** copy of this report call toll-free **1-800-597-9215** and enter **1003**. You can call any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Get your **FREE** special report **NOW** to learn how to ensure a home inspection doesn't cost you the sale of your home.

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