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Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By *Nick Marnell*

New MOFD Director

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District appointed Alameda County deputy district attorney Kathleen Conroy Famulener to fill its Division 1 board seat vacated by Frank Sperling, who resigned in May. The MOFD board approved Famulener by a 3-1 margin at a special meeting July 22.

"I make life and death decisions every day," said Famulener as she described her 35 years in law enforcement during her board interview. Her civic background and her experience as a trustee of De La Salle High School strongly boosted her candidacy. "She impresses me as a quick study," said director Fred Weil.

The only director who opposed Famulener was Steve Anderson, who favored Moraga venture capitalist Nathan Bell.

"I am deeply honored to have been selected as the first woman director on the board of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District," said Famulener. "I look forward to continuing the outstanding work being done by the board to ensure the district's long-term stability and to strengthen the excellent emergency services the district provides."

Famulener's appointment obviates the calling of a special election in November. She will be sworn in at the Aug. 7 board meeting.

Sky Lanterns Won't Fly

It's a romantic scene in "Hangover 2" as the sky lanterns ascend into the heavens at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony. But as beautiful as the sky lanterns are, far more daunting adjectives apply in hot, dry, windy Lamorinda: dangerous and illegal, for starters.

Sky lanterns are airborne paper lanterns that are typically constructed from oiled rice paper on a bamboo frame. The lanterns contain a small candle or fuel cell composed of a waxy flammable material. When the fuel is ignited, the flame heats the air inside the lantern, causing the lantern to rise uncontrollably into the air.

"I received a phone call from a lady who wanted to use sky lanterns for her son's wedding at Saint Mary's College," said Kathy Leonard, fire marshal of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. "This is not a good idea."

Lewis Broschard, fire marshal of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, was just as blunt. "We don't want to see anyone using sky lanterns," he said. "They contain an open flame, their skin can catch fire, they fly and they must eventually land somewhere. Common sense should tell anyone thinking of using these that it is not a good idea."

If that admonition isn't enough of a deterrent, the penalty for sky lantern use might be: violators are subject to a \$1,000 fine, a misdemeanor offense and a bill for the emergency response and resultant damages.

MOFD Baby Update

Kelly Morris, one of three MOFD firefighters seriously injured while responding to a December Highway 24 traffic accident, delivered her baby June 21. "Scarlett McKenna Nichols is doing great," said Morris. "She weighed 7 pounds, 1 ounce and was 19 inches long."

Morris is now able to have MRIs on her knees and ankle. "I really look forward to finding out what's wrong and getting it fixed. So much I want to do, and I'm tired of limping around in pain," she said.

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