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Our Team is Growing!

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MOFD and Lafayette Unite in Property Purchase

District controls the land; it now awaits a fire station partner

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the city of Lafayette entered into a joint powers agreement to purchase a parcel at 1035 Lorinda Lane in the city for use as a potential fire station 46. Escrow closed July 25.

Lafayette unanimously approved the JPA at its July 22 city council meeting. But in the fire district, opposition raged against the deal to the very end. At the July 15 district meeting, director Fred Weil and a host of agitated residents objected to the plan.

"We don't need 46 to better serve our district. And look," said Weil, as he motioned toward the two dozen audience members, most of whom spoke vehemently against the station 46 proposal, "This issue is becoming divisive in our community." He also pointed out that with the district's recent property tax assessments rising nearly 6 percent, along with the \$1.1 million federal grant awarded to MOFD, revenue will exceed the pro-

jections of the district's long-range financial plan, making the station partnership not such an urgent need. "I don't understand the rush," he said.

Other district residents objected to the speculative nature of the \$1.2 million property purchase. One recommended that the district place money into a legal defense fund if it went through with the purchase.

Orinda resident Brook Mancinelli - a previous MOFD director - blasted the board. "It leaves me speechless that you think this is a good idea," he said. "If Lafayette wants to partner with us, let them buy in. Let them put their money where their mouth is."

Others not in attendance were in favor of the consolidation plan. The Fire and Infrastructure Renewal group - an Orinda-based MOFD watchdog - made it clear that it too supports the merger. "Why would everyone in Orinda be against this change, as those at the meeting claim,

when the financial incentives are so significant?" F.A.I.R. expressed in an email after the meeting. The consolidation is expected to save the district nearly \$1 million per year.

Directors Steve Anderson and Alex Evans maintained that the property purchase was essential to the long-term sustainability of the district, while board president John Wyro insisted that owning the parcel was critical for the district as it negotiated for a station 46 partner. "We need to control this piece of property," said Wyro.

"I don't know what we're controlling," responded an exasperated Weil, who cast the only negative vote against the purchase agreement.

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District is expected to present a revised fire station partnership agreement to MOFD, and Lafayette has formed an Emergency Services Task Force to investigate delivery of fire and emergency services.

Lafayette Farmers' Market

SUNDAYS
9:00AM - 1:00PM

URBAN VILLAGE FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION

South BART parking lot
off Happy Valley Road

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.

Please submit Letters and Opinions:
letters@lamorinda weekly.com



USS Potomac RED BULL YOUTH AMERICA'S CUP



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Racing will take place in the same high performance, wing-sailed AC45 catamarans that are used in the America's Cup World Series. The Red Bull Youth America's Cup is scheduled for August/September 2013, in San Francisco, during the heart of the 34th America's Cup racing season.

Join us for a 4 hour cruise on the San Francisco Bay, aboard the USS Potomac. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Presidential Yacht. On board you will find two flat screen televisions, a hosted bar, buffet lunch and great fun. Proceeds go toward the preservation of the USS Potomac and its educational programs.

September 1, 2013

10:00AM - 2:30PM

Price \$195.00 per person