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Civic News Fire Departments

Healy Named MOFD Fire Chief

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District removed the interim tag from Stephen Healy's title Oct. 16 and appointed him as the fifth fire chief in the history of the district. Healy succeeds Randall Bradley, who departed in July.

Healy confirmed that he is taking on his new role as the district faces significant challenges. In fact, the board announced his appointment the same day it authorized him to initiate district service cutbacks. But Healy appeared undaunted by the task. "I have a high degree of confidence that

we will stabilize our finances and move forward as an organization," he said.

Having the top candidate in-house obviated the need to conduct an executive search, according to board president John Wyro. "The search firms know who's out there," he said. "We knew we already had the right guy."

Wyro also noted that there was a significant benefit to promoting a candidate from the ranks. "Keeping our team together has great value," he said. "Especially during such a chal-

lenging time for the district."

"I was delighted to hear of the appointment of chief Healy to this permanent position," said county supervisor Candace Andersen. "He brings the strong leadership and experience we need for MOFD as it works together with ConFire to determine how to best provide the fire, disaster and emergency medical services for our Lamorinda region."

Healy has been with MOFD for seven years and has over 27 years of experience as a fire service professional in California.

Civic News Lafayette

What's the Future of Two Vacant City-Owned Buildings?

By Cathy Tyson



Former doctors' office on Moraga Road



Old library building

Photos Cathy Tyson

Lafayette recently authorized the creation of a volunteer task force to help analyze options that would be the highest, best, and most fiscally responsible use of two vacant, city-owned properties. At issue is 949 Moraga Road, the former doctors' office that was acquired as part of the purchase of four parcels that make up Lafayette's newest parking area, along with the old library building. For years rumors have been swirling about both properties, but no decisions have been made on either one for a variety of reasons.

The citizen's task force will feature representatives from a wide variety of stakeholders that potentially have some skin in the game, to come together and make recommendations about both properties. A list of 15 constituencies was drawn up, with slots for representatives from the Methodist Church, which is directly adjacent to the doctor's office, as well as from the Lafayette school district, a person from Senior Services, an architect, police and more. "Wow, that's a really big task force," said Steven Falk, city manager, echoing

the sentiments of city clerk Joanne Robbins.

The more prominent of the properties is the old library that the city is required to purchase under a 1994 Settlement Agreement with Contra Costa County and the now dissolved Lafayette Redevelopment Agency. Questionable title issues have finally been resolved. "We may be jumping the gun here," said school board president Art Kapoor at the Oct. 15 City Council meeting, "but the School District is interested," in the library property. With Lafayette Elementary School right next door, the old library's parking lot is full to the brim with parents dropping off and picking up children every school day.

Falk said the structure is in "relatively good condition," but noted asbestos in the ceiling tiles and bathrooms that are not handicap accessible. Peering inside, there's nothing but cobwebs and worn out carpet, set in a mid-century modern shoe box.

Concluding that moving the city offices to the old library, instead of continuing to lease office space at Desco Plaza on Mt. Diablo Boule-

vard, where the rent is currently \$280,000 per year, even factoring in approximately \$4 million for acquisition and renovations, would mean significant savings over the medium and long term, according to city staff who crunched the numbers.

The former doctors' office has a lot of potential, but also needs some love. There had been some discussion in the past about turning the doctors' office into a new location for a senior service center or perhaps a location for the police department – possibilities that a fellow task force member representing the Circulation Commission could weigh in on to consider the impact of traffic on accessibility. It could be demolished to make room for additional parking, used for something else or even reserved for future housing.

Ultimately the task force will examine all the moving parts and make recommendations. To check out the full constituency list, read the staff report from the Oct. 15 city council meeting. For those interested in serving, contact city clerk Joanne Robbins at jrobbins@lovelafayette.org.

From Front Page

Drumming Circle Creates Good Vibrations

... continued from page A1

Sixteen women, ranging in age from their late 40s to beyond 70s, showed up for the second meeting to learn from Mary Ferrick how to improve brain health and have fun.

Ferrick holds a master's degree in social work and has been drumming for 30 years. "You are a walking, living, breathing drum," she told each participant. Following her lead, the group rapped on frame drums and hourglass-shaped African djembes – one, two, three ... one, two, three ... with fingers or mallets. The beating resonated around the room before settling in each sternum.

"See how naturally you fell into the elephant rhythm!" Ferrick exclaimed. "It's very matriarchal," she added. Ferrick explained research shows that women became the

world's first drummers when they discovered the musical beat grains made while being winnowed in a bowl or shallow pan. She passed around the depiction of a woman drummer circa 2500 B.C.

Ferrick was on a percussive mission, using the primitive rhythms to encourage meditation and healing. She said the drum's vibrations can "wash away trauma and pain."

"Be sure to drink [plenty of] water," Ferrick said, and then cautioned participants not to worry if they

fell out of sync with the rest of the group. It never happened. The women, smiling and relaxed, some with eyes closed, kept the beat.

When asked why she wanted to form a drumming circle, Kloss replied with her own questions: "Did you see the smiles? Did you feel the energy?"

At session's end, one woman said she'd bring her 96-year-old mother next time. Another, upon leaving, shook her head incredulously, simply saying, "Wow."

Lamorinda Community Drumming for Seniors (all adults welcome, no children please) meets at 11 a.m. the second Monday of each month at Lamorinda Music, 81 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. For information, e-mail Community.drumming.seniors@gmail.com or call (925) 385-0963. To learn more about the history of drumming, Ferrick suggests reading "When Drummers Were Women" by Layne Redmond.