



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published November 6th, 2013

Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

Is Rock Bottom in the Rearview Mirror?

The county Board of Supervisors unanimously ruled at its Oct. 22 meeting that the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District will not have to close an additional fire station in January.

"The picture is brighter, but we have a long way to go," said David Twa, county administrator, who presented the board an update on ConFire finances. Twa stated that he thinks the district's financial situation has bottomed out, and that he sees modest recovery ahead. He credited a projected 5 percent increase in assessed property values - which will result in more tax revenue - and a \$4.65 million federal grant as the main contributors to the rosier picture for fiscal year 2013-14.

Yet Twa cautioned that major obstacles remain for the district, including increased pension liability and health costs, unfunded infrastructure maintenance and the continued depletion of reserve balances, which he said will be close to exhausted by 2017. And he also warned that his financial model assumes only the 23 fire stations currently in use; if the district expects to go back to 30 fully-operating stations and companies, it could not happen using the projected revenue stream.

ConFire chief Jeff Carman recognized the challenges that lie ahead, yet he maintained a positive outlook. "Based on what I see," he said, "I'm sure we are on the way to becoming a healthier organization."

Another Option for Lafayette?

The city of San Pablo, in reaction to the financial difficulties of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, requested that the Board of Supervisors consider that the city implement a response squad to provide emergency medical service to the San Pablo service area. The squad would supplement the heavy demand placed on ConFire station 70, and the cost of the program would be borne by the city. The board, acting as the ConFire board of directors, authorized the district to negotiate program terms with the city.

After the meeting, supervisor and ConFire director Candace Andersen was asked if it made sense for Lafayette, a city within her district, to consider providing a similar type of supplemental service. Lafayette, also served by ConFire but frustrated with its performance, is investigating alternative delivery of fire and emergency medical service to its residents.

"We're at a point where all options should be considered," she said. "It certainly is another possibility to look at." But the District 2 supervisor was hesitant to endorse the idea. "Is it equitable for Lafayette to offer to pay an additional amount, on top of what they're already paying, to have this supplemental service?" said Andersen. "Some would suggest it is fair. I'm not so sure."

She also explained that data needs to be compiled on the performance of the district's own medical squad unit, which was put into service in September. Plus, a draft of the Fitch Report is due in November; she said that it may provide other solutions to providing fire and emergency medical service.

However, Andersen has not lost faith in a much-discussed proposal that she feels will improve service to Lafayette. "I'm still very hopeful that we can make station 46 work," she said.

ConFire Management Reorganization Nearly Complete

At a recent Advisory Fire Commission board meeting, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District outgoing chief Daryl Louder announced the appointment of Alan Hartford as assistant chief in charge of operations, effective Oct 1. Hartford has worked as a fire professional for more than 30 years; his resume includes nearly 20 years at ConFire, where he has held captain and battalion chief positions.

Fire marshal Lewis Broschard has been identified as the likely successor to assistant chief Rich Grace who will retire in March. No official announcement can be made on Broschard until Grace's position is actually vacant.

New chief Jeff Carman was heavily involved in the interviewing and selection process of all candidates.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA