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Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

MOFD Cuts Back Public Meetings

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board voted unanimously Jan. 15 to conduct public meetings once a month starting in March, rather than twice monthly as had been the standard.

"While we have some heavy topics we are working on, monthly meetings should be sufficient for the normal work load," said John Wyro, board president. Director Fred Weil suggested that two special meetings be added to the monthly schedule: one in June, to approve a preliminary budget, and the other in September, to approve the final budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Surrounding fire districts of Albany, Rodeo-Hercules, San Ramon and East Contra Costa County schedule board meetings once a month. The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District board met nine times in 2013.

Evans Asks to Not be Nominated

Each year, in January, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board elects new officers as well as standing and ad hoc committee members. What usually happens is that the vice president is elected to the presidency, assuring a five-year rotation in the top slot among the directors. The Jan. 15 election came with a twist. Board vice president Alex Evans is a founding partner and president of EMC Research, a firm that specializes in polling and public opinion research. Expecting a surge in business that would clash with his MOFD obligations, Evans asked that he be pulled out of the running for the board presidency. "The even numbered years are the busy times in my work cycle," he said, on a conference call from Hawaii. "I respectfully ask that I not be nominated."

A motion was presented to have John Wyro continue as president through 2014 and for the other directors to retain their titles as well. Only director Fred Weil disapproved. He maintained that the proper order of succession was to elect Steve Anderson, board secretary, as president. "Shuffling this around sets a bad precedent," he said.

The motion passed 4-0, with Weil abstaining.

Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force

With neither Lamorinda fire agency able to come up with the estimated \$6 million to build a fire station to replace Lafayette's closed station 16, the city looked into the possibility of funding the replacement station 46 itself. But the Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force report Jan. 21 was not encouraging. Steven Falk, city manager, pointed out the fiscal reality. "The city does not have the funds to help purchase a fire station," he said. "No way can I recommend loaning money out of the city's reserve. The city council would not vote for it anyway."

Task force member Dennis Garrison acknowledged that a new station will benefit the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District and the city. "Would you invest \$6 million to save \$2 million annually? Of course you would," he said. "But, none of us has the \$6 million."

Co-chair Traci Reilly said that the task force will present an update on securing alternate fire and emergency service for the city, and seek further direction, at the Feb. 10 City Council meeting.

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