

One Man Show

MOFD takes center stage at tri-city meeting

By Nick Marnell

The annual Special Joint Meeting of the three Lamorinda civic councils was held at Saint Mary's College April 7, and there was little doubt as to who was the showstopper.

Moraga-Orinda Fire District chief Stephen Healy opened with an update on the increased number of community emergency response teams in Lamorinda, but the Soda Center audience did not let him off that easily. Healy fielded a wide range of fire questions from the public and officials for nearly three quarters of the two-hour meeting.

He relayed the history of proposed fire station 46, from the directive of prior chief Randall Bradley to check out the possibilities, to the use of software in determining resultant overall response times that he confirmed will be improved because of the new station. "Some will be positively impacted and some negatively," said Healy. "But I'm looking at the big picture, over 4,400 properties. Overall (station 46) will be a benefit to the community."

The jointly operated station between MOFD and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District has been in discussion for over one year. "It's the right thing to do, and I hope it is successful," said the chief.

The recent murmurs of replacing firefighters with civilians to operate ambulances in both fire

districts concerned Moraga resident and past MOFD director Dick Olsen. Healy made no bones about the reason: cost. And he said that yes, the districts have been exploring the idea, and that the public will soon be hearing more about it.

"And as long as I'm talking about how expensive firefighters are, I want to stress that they are worth it," said Healy. "And they do not deserve the blame for the high district retirement costs." He explained that the majority of those costs accrue to the benefit of retired firefighters.

Moraga Town Council member Dave Trotter asked if the elimination of firefighters will make the communities vulnerable. "It's always been 'value added' to have firefighters on all of our calls, as 63 percent of our calls are medical," said Healy. "Because of our low call volume, we are nowhere near an unreasonable situation with our deployment model."



Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors Meetings

Next meetings:

Wednesday, May 7
check website for updates

(Go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for location and more information)

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Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force

Task force member Jim Fajardo outlined the basics of the service model of a typical fire department at the group's April 9 meeting. Discussion ensued over the benefits of two-person crews versus three, where best to locate a fire station, and the risk of the occurrence of an Oakland Hills type of fire.

"The Oakland Hills fire is a misleading concept thrown in to these meetings," said task force member Rich Cunningham. "It's all about fear. It's used to manipulate the political process."

The abstract discussion clearly frustrated Vince Wells, Local 1230 president. "This is all well and good," he said. "But tell me exactly. What does Lafayette want?"

"Apparently, they don't know what they want," said Lafayette fire commissioner Bill Granados after the meeting.

The task force was created by the City Council to check out alternative delivery of fire and emergency services to the city. The investigation will continue at its May 15 meeting.

MOFD Meeting Schedule Revised

After a short trial of conducting public meetings once a month, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District will revert to its twice monthly meeting format.

"The present schedule has become problematic," said Fire Chief Stephen Healy. Meetings will now be scheduled for the first and third Wednesdays of each month.

The revised schedule, approved at the April 16 board meeting, kicks in with the district meeting of May 7.

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