



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire

District Board of Directors
Wednesday, Feb. 4, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library Community Room
1500 Saint Mary's Road
Moraga, CA 94556
For meeting times and agendas,
visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107,
Administration Building,
651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas,
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

Emergency response information
and training:

Lamorinda Community
Emergency Response Team (CERT)
www.lamorindacert.org.

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Lafayette Task Force Imposes Its Will

By Nick Marnell

Service on a government task force often goes unnoticed and unrewarded. But a task force created by the city of Lafayette exacted its own notice at the county governing level, and the residents of Contra Costa County may soon be rewarded because of its efforts.

When the Board of Supervisors closed Lafayette's station 16 of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, the city formed an Emergency Services Task Force to investigate alternative delivery of fire and emergency medical service to its residents. After months of deliberation, the task force agreed to support station 46, a joint venture at the Lafayette-Orinda border between ConFire and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. During a discussion of the

Lafayette ambulance service that would be provided out of the new station – to be staffed by MOFD personnel – the complexities of ambulance exclusive operating areas arose.

In 2013 ConFire captain Gil Caravantes responded to an emergency medical call in Lafayette, and based on his analysis at the scene, Caravantes requested mutual aid from MOFD to transport the patient to the hospital. His action violated the contract between Contra Costa County and its ambulance provider, American Medical Response, in part because AMR holds the exclusive right to provide ambulance service in Lafayette.

Task force member Jim Cunha spoke of the need to change that section of the county ambulance contract, portions of which are available for competitive bid this year. "Station 46 should be able to be dispatched to medical calls in Lafayette," he said. "Include in the (request for proposal) the ability of the new ambulance vendor to be allowed to cross district boundaries."

The task force agreed, notified the county EMS director in October and submitted to the Board of Supervisors the following revised paragraph for

the county ambulance RFP draft: "In the interest of getting the quickest ambulance to the patient, (the Local Emergency Medical Services Agency) requires the Contractor to make a good faith effort to execute a satisfactory mutual aid agreement with the agencies responding from a neighboring jurisdiction. LEMSA will approve an appropriately structured agreement to use the closer ambulances."

"(The Caravantes) situation is the very scenario that this paragraph is attempting to address," said Ben Smith, ConFire battalion chief, EMS division.

Co-chair Brandt Andersson further explained the rationale behind the task force action. "I think that it is just common sense and something that public safety agencies do as a matter of course," he said. "We wanted to be sure that if the contract is won by a for-profit entity, that they would be held to the same standard of safety first, profit second."

"It is our contention that patients' lives are more important than invisible borders that separate fire districts," added co-chair Traci Reilly.

The supervisors unanimously ap-

proved the RFP, including the task force changes, on Jan. 13. The RFP went to the California EMS Authority for approval, and unless it determines the need for substantive changes in the document, bidding for the available portions of the county ambulance contract is expected to begin by April.

The contract will be awarded by the Board of Supervisors, which is also the governing body of ConFire, a likely bidder for that contract. Sharon Anderson, county counsel, issued a report which states that the board is not precluded from considering the district's bid just because it serves as the governing body of both entities.

"We are cognizant of the risks as to being both boards," said Supervisor Candace Andersen. "That is why we've requested an independent financial analysis of each bid as well as the hiring of two independent observers. We are committed to providing the highest level of emergency medical service at the best price."

And as implored by the Lafayette task force, to provide emergency medical service that embodies a standard of public safety over profit.

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ConFire Academy Graduates 15

Hopefully not coming to a neighborhood near you



ConFire's Denise Cannon administers the oath to the graduating class of Academy 47.

Photo Nick Marnell

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District held its graduation ceremony for the 15 firefighters of Academy 47 on Jan. 15 in Concord near the district training facility. While the event bore a formal, almost militaristic air early on, the tone relaxed as the new firefighters satirized actions of their superiors, and family members pinned their heroes at the conclusion of the festivities.

Retired De La Salle High School football coach Bob Ladouceur, subject of the 2014 hit movie "When the

Game Stands Tall," delivered the keynote address. He talked about the similarities between football and firefighting, stressing the necessity for teamwork and how critical it is to watch each others' backs at all times. He also said that he applied to become a firefighter many years ago, "but I failed the written test," he confessed. His daughter learned from his mistake, though, as she works as a firefighter with the Berkeley Fire Department.

"These firefighters should be proud that they have passed all the

tests and rigors of our hiring and recruit processes, and they are now on the street serving the citizens of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District," said Fire Chief Jeff Carman. "I am confident that our academy staff has prepared them to pass their probationary period and we welcome these new firefighters to the district."

Probationary firefighters Peter Doppe and Natividad Porras are assigned to Lafayette stations 15 and 17, respectively. *N. Marnell*

Moraga

Plan for New Canyon Bridge Takes Shape

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The total cost of the bridge is estimated at \$3.4 million. The town secured a federal grant for 88.5 percent of the total cost, and is required to fund \$400,000. Kwan added that the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) might help with matching funds.

The new bridge will continue to have two car lanes, with added bicycle lanes on both sides and a raised pedestrian walkway on the side where Canyon Road meets the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail.

The new bridge will be significantly higher than the current one to incorporate 100-year flood data

as well as East Bay Municipal Utility District water discharge volume. In order to create a smooth transition onto the higher bridge, the road on both sides will be reconstructed.

One resident voiced concern about having a wide bridge with bike lanes that dump down onto a very narrow two-lane road. "That's very hazardous," he said. Moraga Chief of Police Bob Priebe noted that as far as he knows there has been only one collision on the bridge involving a horse trailer. He added that his concern is for bicyclists heading south, especially when they reach

the narrow turn bearing right on Canyon Road. "I would like to see us have advisory signs moving bicyclists from Canyon Road to the (Lafayette-Moraga) trail that comes back down (onto Canyon) where there is better clearance."

The construction, which will be staggered to keep one traffic lane open at all times, is scheduled to begin in 2016. Traffic will be regulated by a traffic light. More information is available on the town's website at moraga.ca.us/canyonbridge. A comprehensive Q&A is available on the bridge project page.