

**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published February 11th, 2015

MOFD to Consider Citizens' Committee

By Nick Marnell

The few district residents who remained to the end witnessed an historic event at the Jan. 26 Moraga-Orinda Fire District finance committee meeting. Five minutes before the close of the meeting, committee chair Steve Anderson said that he would take the proposal of a citizens' finance committee to the full MOFD board for consideration. Should the board approve the formation of a citizens' committee, it will become the first in the history of the fire district.

District administrative services director Gloriann Sasser updated the committee on the mid-year financials, which not only projected a surplus of more than \$719,000 but also showed a balanced general fund, with revenue exceeding expenditures, in each year of the district's long range financial plan. So flush is the district that, for the first time, it funded \$84,000 into a trust to cover retiree health benefit costs. Prior to this fiscal year, the district paid the retiree health benefits on a pay-as-you-go basis. "You don't wait till your kids go to college to start paying for it," explained Sasser. "We'll be funding their retiree health benefits while the employees are healthy and working." After Sasser finished her presentation, Orinda resident Steve Cohn, frustrated with the lack of resident input on the district finances, confronted the committee members. "The city of Orinda has many citizens' committees," he said. "The town of Moraga has many citizens' committees. MOFD's budget is as big as Moraga's and Orinda's put together, and you've never had a citizens' committee. Is it that much different?"

Cohn, with the support of Orinda's Vince Maiorana, proposed either appointing a private citizen to the MOFD finance committee, or that the district form a finance advisory commission. He suggested that the citizens' committee could parse the district's long range financial plan, review the structure of the district budget and especially recommend revisions to the MOFD balance sheet.

"It's a useless document," said Cohn.

Anderson said that he will take the proposal into a full board session for thorough analysis. "The board would want to have a discussion with staff on how this might operate, how much staff time might be appropriate for it and to talk to the cities about how it works," added finance committee member Brad Barber.

"A citizens' committee is a good idea," said Anderson later. "Why wouldn't we want to do it?"

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA