



## Fire Districts

### Public Meetings

#### Moraga-Orinda Fire

District Board of Directors  
Wednesday, Feb. 18, 7 p.m.  
Moraga Library Community Room  
1500 Saint Mary's Road  
Moraga, CA 94556  
For meeting times and agendas,  
visit [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org)

#### ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, March 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](http://www.lamorindacert.org).

Share your thoughts, insights and  
opinions with your community.

#### Send a letter to

the editor: [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com)

# 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?"

Lafayette

## Sustainable Lafayette: New Board, New Energy, New Projects

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Al Gore was one of the teachers. Since then Kwok has passed what he's learned on to 1,200 people and plans double that number this year. "This is a critical year in global climate negotiations," he says. "We ask, what must America do to create success on the road to Paris

(December climate conference)? Then we can ask what must Lafayette do to create success and get other cities to act with us?"

Associate City Planner Michael Cass has served as the staff liaison for the City of Lafayette's Environmental Task Force for about two years. "The task force studies environmental issues and makes environmental policy recommendations to the city council," he said. "I was inspired to join based on my interaction with a number of current and former board members, who are actively working to make Lafayette 'green.'" Cass grew up in a family where environmental issues were routinely discussed. This year, as the chair of the Waste Diversion Committee, Cass plans to partner with Republic Services to help Lafayette reach its goal to divert 75

percent of all waste from the landfill. He is also actively involved with a small committee that is planning Lafayette's 10th Annual Earth Day Festival, which this year will focus on different transportation options.

Walter heard about Sustainable Lafayette through newsletters, "but it wasn't until I met Brad Crane – a fellow Lafayette Elementary School parent who also bikes his kids to school each day – that I became actively involved in the organization," she says. A very outdoorsy person, Walter runs a communications agency whose clients are green-minded architects and builders. This year on the board she will be co-leading, with Gailene Nelson, a new initiative focused on getting our kids outside. "We are so for-

tunate to have Lafayette's many open spaces in our backyard," she says. "Gailene and I want to encourage kids to connect with and play in our beautiful outdoors. We also want to help parents understand the many developmental and health benefits of unstructured play in nature."

"These kids are the next generation of Sustainable Lafayette members, it is a win/win to get them engaged," says Nelson, who is passionate about conservation and comes from a tech background. She is very interested in helping Sustainable Lafayette use technology more effectively. "I'm big about shortening time-to-market and getting things done," she says.

For more information about Sustainable Lafayette, visit [www.sustainablelafayette.org](http://www.sustainablelafayette.org).

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Lafayette

## Looking at Options to Improve Reliez Station Corridor

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Pros and cons of each alternative were laid out, along with estimated costs of each option. Consultants sought to gather input from residents about the alternatives; some were more popular than others.

The biggest intersection at Olympic Boulevard and Pleasant Hill Road features problems such as school traffic backups, right of way violations and pedestrian safety issues. Three alternative solutions were presented: a traffic signal, a roundabout, or doing nothing and leaving it as is.

One of the presenters pointed out that "the community repeatedly rejected" use of a traffic signal. The second alternative, a roundabout, was deemed an "eloquent solution" by the consultants, providing move-

ment along with free right turns that will accommodate an abundant amount of traffic, while reducing speed and reducing delays at a low operating cost but a higher installation cost.

"There's not one silver bullet," said Paul Menaker, explaining that each intersection poses different problems and needs a unique solution. As the meeting wrapped up, residents were asked to put a red sticker on the alternative option that they preferred for each intersection.

City Engineer Tony Coe explained that changes could be phased in or put on hold until further funding becomes available.

Additional topics discussed included what to do about large trucks on these narrow, hilly streets. The

goal is to improve signage to warn truck drivers ahead of time before they get onto Reliez Station Road so they have room to recalculate a more truck-friendly approach to their destination.

While most everyone at the meeting agreed there is room for improvement along the corridor, the challenging part will be selecting a solution, given existing budget constraints and differences of opinion. The entire presentation, including all of the alternatives and their respective costs can be viewed online at the city website ([www.lovelafayette.org](http://www.lovelafayette.org)) under the Hot Topics tab. Going forward, the plan will be presented to the Circulation Commission for review, which will then recommend a course of action to the City Council.

Orinda

## Orinda City Council Clarifies Policies and Procedures for Public Meetings

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Of the roughly 20 speaker cards submitted Jan. 13, Glazer said about 14 provided addresses while all gave names – "except for the gentleman who wouldn't spell or pronounce his last name." In previous meetings, when council members have requested name clarifications, they indicated they were doing so to simply be polite and not mangle an occasionally challenging pronunciation.

"I know names has been a contention thing, and I think people have assumed that their name was required," explained Phillips, who reiterated later, "I think that it's very important to allow people to speak without necessarily saying what their name is or spelling their last name. So, I want to make sure people are aware that's not required to speak in a public forum."

Glazer observed that the "biggest misunderstanding that I think I feel when we're engaged in public forum is that, 'Why aren't you addressing? Why aren't you saying something, and why can't we talk about this problem whatever it is?'"

No input was provided by audience members Jan. 13 or on Jan. 20 when the changes were formally adopted by council.

From front page

## Science Teacher Wins Award

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"I emphasize knowing versus memorizing, developing theories and explanations, drawing conclusions, observing and giving my students plenty of opportunities to use and develop critical thinking skills."

The Robotics class features a series of challenges throughout the school year; the last group project

had four classmates each programming their homemade robots to perform a choreographed dance together to music. The current mind blowing challenge is to program a robot to deliver one marble at each of three stations along a path with increasingly narrow openings. Students Cierra Taylor

and Sami Samuels happened to be in his classroom at lunchtime and were happy to have their robot "Fergie" included in Meneghetti's photo. Paul Verbanszky of Campolino High School and Karen Kreider Short of St. Francis of Assisi School were also awarded Eukel Teacher Trust grants.