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## Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

*By Nick Marnell*

New ConFire Operations Chief

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Chief Jeff Carman announced that 13-year ConFire veteran Lon Goetsch has been promoted to assistant chief of operations. After 12 years with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Goetsch worked his way through the ConFire ranks as a firefighter-paramedic, engineer, captain and battalion chief. "I'm humbled and proud to be our operations chief," he said. "We've survived one of the most difficult periods I've ever seen in my 25 years. We are recovering, we are evolving and we are stronger."

The operations chief oversees district firefighting efforts, including training and emergency medical and rescue services. He directly supervises the battalion chiefs, who lead the 24 on-duty companies. ConFire comprises four battalions, numbered 1 through 4; Lafayette resides in Battalion 1.

"Please take the time to improve the defensible space around your homes," Goetsch advised Lamorindans. "With the extra dry fire season ahead, it's going to be a very dangerous year."

TV Coverage of Station 46 Opposition

Two Bay Area television stations recently aired the concerns of The Committee to Save Honey Hill Fire Station over the planned relocation of Moraga-Orinda Fire District fire station 43 to a new facility on the Orinda-Lafayette border. Construction of the new fire station 46, a combined effort between MOFD and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, whose Lafayette station 16 closed in 2012, awaits approval from both district governing boards. The joint venture is expected to save each district \$1 million in annual operating costs.

"I found the experience interesting in that they spent quite a bit of time with us, filming us answering questions, and then used very little of what was said," said committee spokesperson Ellen Dale. "But, I think they both included our most important concern, namely the increase in response times." The grass roots committee acknowledges that station 43 experiences low call volume, but fears that the response times in its Orinda neighborhood will increase by two minutes once the new station opens.

"We say one life lost, one home that burns down while waiting longer for help to arrive, is worth more than the million dollars they hope to save," said Dale.

Should construction of the new station be approved, MOFD plans to conduct public workshops throughout the district. "We are working to put all of our data into a form that will be understandable to the public," said Fire Chief Stephen Healy, who noted that a report the district commissioned on station 46 response times has not been completed.

MOFD Approves OPEB Trust Fund

In January, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District approved the pre-funding of its other post-employment benefit costs, which include the cost of retiree health care benefits. The district finance committee recommended March 11 that MOFD set up an OPEB trust account and hire an investment firm to manage the trust account. And at its March 18 meeting, the district voted to pre-fund its OPEB costs into a trust for the first time in its history, simultaneously approving Public Agency Retirement Services as the trust manager. The district will fund \$84,000 into the trust account this fiscal year. MOFD administrative services director Gloriann Sasser said that pre-funding OPEB costs strengthens the district's financial position by lowering its net OPEB liability, and using the earnings on investments will reduce future employer costs. The district carries both a \$17 million unfunded OPEB liability and an estimated \$40 million unfunded pension liability.

"It's the first time we've even been in the position to do something like this since 2008," said director Fred Weil, citing the district's improved financial condition due to increased property tax revenue and lower labor costs.

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