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## Lafayette Reacts to Station 16 Announcement

By Nick Marnell



One step closer to opening up that door  
Photo Ohlen Alexander

reminded the board that the pressure for detachment has grown, and is very real. "Our patience has a limit," he said. "It's time to resolve this."

"We can't promise that we'll never close a station again," said director Karen Mitchoff. "And it's getting tiring hearing about Lafayette paying more into the district. This is not a fee for service; you are paying for capacity."

ConFire chief Jeff Carman explained that Lafayette, one of nine cities in the fire district, is part of a major network, much larger than MOFD. "We can supply you with bulldozers, helicopters, fire investigators, an infinite number of resources," he said. He told officials at the Aug. 18 task force meeting about the recent arrest of the arsonist thanks to the work of four ConFire investigators. "That's the stuff you don't see," he said. "We are sure that he set several fires in Lafayette."

Should ConFire nix the proposed station 46 joint venture with MOFD and begin the rehabilitation of station 16 on Los Arabis Drive, Carman estimated that the work will take 12-15 months to complete. Task force member Rich Cunningham, who helped build a fire station in Albany, warned the chief that, since the station rehab project must go through the county public works department, he should count on a lot longer time frame than 15 months.

Jim Fajardo, task force member and retired fire chief, piled on with the skepticism. "I don't trust that the timeline will be met, or that in the future, we won't be in the same place we are today," he said, echoing that secession was a real possibility if the city does not receive the fire service it has purchased.

"If it's still the desire of Lafayette to detach and join another fire district, I can't say anything about that," said Carman. "I try to balance fire service for our district between nine cities, within a budget. I'm trying to provide good, honest communication in the district. I'm what you've got, and if you don't like what you've got, I can't change that."

"We put in our money, and we expect full coverage of fire and medical service," said task force co-chair and Lafayette mayor Brandt Andersson. "As long as we get that, I'm not as concerned about the money."

"But if we don't get full coverage, we're off the reservation."

The task force plans to next meet Sept. 22, after Carman presents the station 16 study to his board.

Though the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District announced that it will consider reopening Lafayette fire station 16, city officials and emergency services task force members refrained from patting each other on the back just yet.

"It's been a long time. Financially, 16 is viable and we're behind it," said task force co-chair and Lafayette vice mayor Traci Reilly. But she told the fire district board of directors Aug. 18 that the city wanted assurance that station 16 would not be the first station shut down during the district's next financial crisis. "We're tired of temporary solutions," she said.

The city of Lafayette threatened to detach from ConFire and possibly join the Moraga-Orinda Fire District if the district did not improve delivery of its fire and emergency medical service, claiming that the city did not receive its fair share for its \$9 million annual payment. City manager Steve Falk

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[back](#)

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