



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors

Wednesday, Sept. 2, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library Community Room
1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga
For meeting times and agendas,
visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, Sept. 15, 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

Share your thoughts,
insights and opinions
with your community.
**Send a letter to
the editor:** [letters@
lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com)

- ◆ HARDWOODS
- ◆ CARPETS
- ◆ RUGS
- ◆ LINOLEUM
- ◆ TILE
- ◆ LAMINATE

FAMILY -OWNED
30 YEARS !

3344 Mt Diablo Blvd
in Lafayette
925-284-4440
lamorindaflors.com



ConFire Station 16 Back in Play

By Nick Marnell



After four years, help indeed may be on the way Photo Ohlen Alexander

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District board of directors authorized fire chief Jeff Carman Aug. 18 to investigate the cost of reopening fire station 16 in Lafayette, putting on hold plans for a joint fire station 46 with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

Discussions of the joint venture have been fraught with negatives since then-MOFD chief Randy Bradley proposed in 2013 that Orinda station 43 and Lafayette station 16 merge across districts. MOFD questioned the financial capability of Con-

Fire to complete the deal, and the ConFire board originally voted against the consolidation, blaming a terrible financial environment. In 2014, as the economy improved, both districts began work on the joint station agreement.

But Carman told the board that the station 46 negotiations have been difficult. "There are operational contract issues," he said, starting with the annual district call volume: 5,000 for MOFD and 50,000 for ConFire. "They have more time to do things like public education, things we'd love to have the time to do," he said, noting that if MOFD took its company out of station 46 to conduct an educational seminar at a high school, ConFire may find issue with that. And if ConFire wanted to pull the 46 company to move up and cover for a Walnut Creek call, Carman said MOFD residents might have a problem. "And that's going to occur a disproportionate amount of time," he said.

The chief said that response times in western Lafayette have increased more than 30 seconds since station 16 closed. "Lafayette is in a high fire hazard severity zone," he explained. "There is potential for devastating

property loss, and that worries me more than anything."

North Orinda residents have touted response time concerns of their own should their local station 43 be closed, staging a petition drive to halt construction of the proposed joint station. Carman acknowledged that the opposition could further delay the project. "It was clear to me that the Orinda residents were not happy about moving their fire station and being associated with ConFire," he said. "It gave me insight that this was not going to be an easy process."

The clincher for the chief was a recent report from a ConFire contractor who disputed conventional wisdom and said that shuttered station 16 could be rebuilt, and at a much lower cost than the construction of fire station 46. ConFire's capital investment was estimated to be less than \$1 million to repair station 16 as opposed to \$6 million to build station 46, and the operational costs for station 16 would increase \$800,000 per year, about half of the district's share of projected annual costs of the joint station. Carman projected a 12-15 month timetable for the repairs, and he asked the board for authorization to further investigate sta-

tion 16 as an alternative to station 46.

"Move forward with all haste," said director Karen Mitchoff, with the other three directors expressing a similar sentiment.

"We're disappointed because we were making real progress on a deal," said MOFD board president Alex Evans. "But we are happy that ConFire is going to rebuild and restaff station 16. Our fear was that they'd never do that and MOFD would carry an unfair burden." MOFD Fire Chief Stephen Healy agreed that opening station 16 would increase regional fire capacity. "However, 46 did offer the flexibility of having one or two engines staffed on a daily basis," he said. Evans said the board will take no action on the property purchased for the new station until station 16 is up and running.

"I am doing back flips!" said Ellen Dale, leader of the north Orinda community group that opposed station 46. "We were prepared to force this plan to a referendum. So, the chief was correct in his assessment that this would have been delayed."

Carman plans to update his board Sept. 22 on the feasibility of reopening station 16.

Lafayette Reacts to Station 16 Announcement

By Nick Marnell



One step closer to opening up that door Photo Ohlen Alexander

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 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.

Lafayette Joins SunShares Program

Lamorinda residents can opt in while awaiting decision by Moraga and Orinda councils

By Sophie Braccini

Lafayette and three other East Bay cities have joined SunShares – a program managed by non-profit Vote Solar that offers a 15 percent discount on purchased or leased solar equipment. The Orinda and Moraga city councils will decide next month whether they will join the program, but according to SunShares Program Director Jessie Denver, any Lamorinda resident can join. The SunShares program has helped put solar panels on roofs throughout the United States, including about 1,000 in the Peninsula.

Staff from the city of Walnut Creek and Vote Solar spoke to the city of Lafayette's Environmental Task Force, which recommended that Lafayette join the program, said Lafayette assistant planner Megan Canales. "On June 8, the council adopted a resolution authorizing our participation in the program," she said.

By offering pre-negotiated pricing, ease of administration and public outreach, Canales said the task force and council anticipate that more residents will choose to install solar. "The city wants to encourage solar installations in general," she said. Canales said she believes that the increased solar installations will help Lafayette meet state goals set out in Assembly



Solar panels on rooftops

Photo provided

Bill 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act, in addition to the city's environmental strategy goals.

Through SunShares, Vote Solar hopes to increase sales of solar panels before the 30 percent federal tax credit ends in 2016, said Denver. "We are also aware that utility companies have filed proposals to change the net metering structure with lesser compensation for solar customers," she added. "If they are successful, the people who have already installed their panels will be grandfathered in."

One of the objectives is to make choosing solar simpler. "With this

program, we simply want people to find out if solar is good for them," explained Denver. "There is no obligation to receive a proposal; people can just see if it is a good fit for their situation."

By working with cities and advocacy groups to advertise the program, she said the installers save on their customer acquisition costs. "They pass the savings to the users with the 15 percent discount," she said, adding that the two companies chosen for the program, Skytech Solar and Sunrun, provide the best equipment and service. ... continued on page A12

Cabinet Modifications

With over 25 years fulfilling custom needs, we can alter or modify most cabinetry, while still utilizing your existing cabinetry for:

- Large TVs/ Refrigerators and appliances
- Recycle Bins and shelf pullouts
- Cabinet alterations/repairs

We can help with home, office, entertainment, custom cabinetry, shelving, crown mouldings, baseboards, new doors or mantels!



925.827.1093

Paul Kephart Master Craftsman
www.TheCabinetMd.com

Licensed Cabinet & Millwork Contractor #598395

BURKIN ELECTRIC

"Let Us Light Up Your Life"

Residential • Commercial • Industrial

Serving Contra Costa since 1991
More than 35 years experience

All Work Done by Owner

Bonded & Insured
Lic.#C10-631523



Professional Installation of:

- Ceiling Fans, Recessed & Track Lighting • Kitchen or Bath Remodel
- Exterior/Security/Landscape Lighting • Electrical Service Upgrade
- Complete Home Wiring - Old & New • Spa Installation

(925) 672-1519

www.BurkinElectric.net

