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Evans Once Again an MOFD No-Show

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District elected directors Fred Weil and Brad Barber to the district finance committee at its Jan. 6 meeting. Weil replaces Steve Anderson, who took over as the 2016 board president. North Orinda Division 5 director Alex Evans was not present.

According to MOFD public records, since joining the board in late 2012 Evans has missed 14 of the district semimonthly meetings, far more than any other director. Evans turned down a nomination for the board presidency in 2014, blaming his heavy workload in even-numbered years; he did not attend five meetings that year. Yet in 2015, the year for which he served as president, Evans missed six more meetings.

"I have been out of town for work more than I had expected would be necessary," said Evans. "I do my best to plan around MOFD meetings but unfortunately it is not always possible."

Evans is the president and co-founder of EMC Research, Inc, which conducts opinion and market research for a wide range of political, corporate, public agency and not-for-profit clients across the country. Local clients include Sutter Health and Oakland mayor Libby Schaaf. The company announced Jan. 4 that it merged with Hamilton Campaigns, an Orlando-based research firm.

"I'm not trying to dismiss the issue of my attendance," said Evans, refusing to cite the merger as an excuse for his truancy.

North Orinda has been at the apex of much of the recent district turmoil. MOFD purchased property on Lorinda Lane in 2013 as the site for proposed fire station 46, a joint venture with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. The project was assailed by residents of the Honey Hill neighborhood, who claimed that station 46 would result in higher response times. The venture never got off the ground, and the district plans to sell the property.

Also in Division 5, a structure fire in June destroyed a home on Charles Hill Road, and neighborhood residents questioned the district fire response. Fire marshal Kathy Leonard labeled private roads in north Orinda as some of the most treacherous in the district due to their unruly vegetation. And the district plans to spend \$4 million this year to rebuild dilapidated fire station 43 on Via Las Cruces.

North Orindan Ellen Dale said that residents are aware of Evans' absences. "We expect he may well have to miss many additional board meetings in 2016, given that it is a presidential election year," she said. "We are very concerned about this possibility since there are a number of critical decisions that the MOFD board must make this year - not the least of which is finalizing the process of rebuilding our Honey Hill Fire Station."

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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