



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Jan. 20, 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, Feb. 9, 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

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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 Orinda 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."

Andersen Takes Over as Chair of Board of Supervisors

By Nick Marnell



Candace Andersen is sworn in as the 2016 Board Chair by presiding Contra Costa County superior court judge Steve Austin on Jan. 5.

photo provided

The embattled Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, criticized throughout 2015 by groups ranging from labor unions to public officials, elected District 2 Supervisor Candace Andersen as Chair at its Jan. 5 meeting. Andersen, whose

district includes Lamorinda, replaces outgoing Chair John Gioia.

Supervisors delivered a pointed, if somewhat defensive, message to those who disapproved of the board's actions, including union leaders who lambasted the supervisors over their ill-fated pay raise, and directors of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, who called the county leadership "unreliable" and "ineffectual" over its vacillation of support for proposed fire station 46.

"Critics often say that government can't play a role in improving lives. Some say it even gets in the way," said Gioia. He highlighted the passage of Laura's Law, the ambulance contract awarded to the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District and the enrollment of 200,000 residents into the county health insurance plan, all accomplished by staying within the county's \$3 billion budget.

"How many public agencies can say they've positively impacted hundreds of thousands of lives while exercising the highest level of fiscal management?" said Gioia.

"Residents don't understand how county government serves them in so many ways," added Su-

pervisor Karen Mitchoff.

Andersen often voted as the lone wolf, not only against county measures such as a health care program for adults not covered by the Affordable Care Act, but even against her own pay raise. "We've had the opportunity to agree to disagree on tough issues, but we've always found our way back to the family, to get back to doing the work of the people," said Supervisor Federal Glover, who returned to the chambers after an eight-month medical absence.

New vice chair Mary Piepho expressed tearful gratitude to her family, friends, staff and constituents as she begins her final year as District 3 Supervisor. She announced in December that she will not seek reelection after three terms in office.

Andersen, who vowed to continue to steer the county on its path of fiscal sustainability, later offered high praise to Lamorinda. "The Town of Moraga and the cities of Lafayette and Orinda are unique and special communities," she said. "I look forward to another year of us working together to help them accomplish their goals and to preserve the outstanding quality of life Lamorinda residents enjoy."

Moraga

Town Manager Moves On

Coming from Fremont, where on the best nights two people from the community attended the council meetings, Keimach was impressed by the level of community engagement. She noticed a remarkably high number of community volunteers. She remembers when she was asked to draft a timeline for the Measure K campaign, "I did it and thought, there is so much to do! How will I be able to do this along with everything else? But when I presented it to the volunteer committee, they took charge of everything. I had never seen such a thing, they actually did the work."

Among her achievements of the past five years, Keimach is quite proud of the town chamber that was built at 335 Rheem. "We kept the cost below \$1 million, when in most communities such high-tech meeting places come to many millions," says Keimach. On the administrative side, she said that budget, contracts and oversight processes have improved every year. "I feel very good about all the foundation stuff that was done in cooperation with the department heads," she says. She hired them all, except for the chief of

police, parks and recreation director, and town clerk.

When Keimach came on board, she had questions about the staff. "When I visited the office before I was hired it was so silent, everyone had their door closed and I was concerned I would be lonely," says Keimach. Her actual experience was completely different. "There is something special in the way people work here and the culture of openness among staff," she says. "This is very unique to this town." At the time of the economic downturn, it was impossible to give staff raises, so Keimach found a way to reward her staff that did not cost a penny to the community: she gave them every other Friday off.

"It's impossible to adequately describe what working with her has meant to me," says Priebe. "She's brilliant, a consummate professional, engenders trust with everyone and goes about her job and life with a great positive approach and sense of humor. I am blessed to have her as a mentor and be able to learn so much about so many things from her."

There are some big issues that Keimach did

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not supervise to completion that her successor will need to address, such as the Hacienda de las Flores plan. The architects were supposed to submit a proposal last October, but the options on the table were too grandiose for the town. "They will come back with a smaller scale project that would be implemented in phases," says Keimach, who believes that it is also important to include public use for the Hacienda. The other big unresolved issue is the delayed maintenance of many assets, including the drainage system. Keimach is also concerned about traffic.

"In general the town is in good hands," she says. "There is a good public debate going on regarding how much and what kind of development. Hopefully it will continue as a civil debate." She knows that every community in the Bay Area is struggling with this issue, which is the result of a good economy that creates jobs and the need for more housing.

A goal setting session for the town is scheduled on Jan. 21. The search for a new town manager has begun, but it can take several months to find a qualified candidate.

Moraga

New Art in Public Spaces

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"Moraga is a town filled with musicians and painters, craftsmen, dancers and singers. Public art signifies that we celebrate this part of our lives in the way athletics fields mark our love of sports."

For those interested in participating in the administration of the town,

other volunteer opportunities are available on different boards and committees: the Audit and Finance Committee, the Design Review Board, the Local Sales Tax Oversight Committee, the Park and Recreation Commission, and the Planning Commission. If interested in any position,

residents are invited to complete the application and questionnaire found online at moraga.ca.us, and submit a letter of interest and resume to the town clerk's office, 329 Rheem Boulevard, or to the town clerk by 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 22.

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