



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Feb. 17, 7 p.m.
Sarge Littlehale Community Room
22 Orinda Way, Orinda
For meeting times and agendas,
visit www.mofd.org

ConFire

Board of Directors
Tuesday, March 1, 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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MOFD Revives Sophisticated Planning Tool

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District survived the Great Recession, a labor contract is in place and the station 46 negotiations have ended, and though the district is on its third fire chief since 2009, this one gives no indication that he is about to leave. So the district has committed to redraft its strategic plan, last updated seven years ago, at the time expected to posit as a vision and guideline for two years.

"The timing is right," said Fire Chief Stephen Healy.

The 2009 plan identified five areas of focus for the district: operational readiness, human resources, community partnerships and outreach, fire prevention and education, and fiscal responsibility. Healy noted that two of the areas cause him concern, starting with human resources.

"We have opportunities for coaching, mentoring and preparation for advancement," said the chief. "What are the leaders of the organization doing for each other? This is an area I felt we

were lacking."

Healy admitted that he has been remiss in this area. "It all starts with me," he said. "I haven't spent as much time with my chiefs as I should have, providing them career advice and career counseling. I want to help the employee who wants to be a fire chief."

He expects the same performance out of his battalion chiefs. "Once a week, at least monthly, I want them to meet with their captains on a regular basis," he said. And not only with captains who aspire to become chief officers; Healy wants as much consideration given to those who wish to remain captains, to keep their skills sharp through cutting-edge training.

"You've got to always be thinking about your own people," said the chief.

Fire prevention is another area that requires Healy's immediate attention. "This division is very stressed," he said. MOFD eliminated the assistant fire marshal

position in 2013 and shifted much of the fire prevention work to outside contractors and district aides. Field work, weed abatements, plan reviews and the updating of the district codes and ordinances are all under the purview of the fire marshal, whose responsibility is to keep the public safe. Healy described the duties as technical and tedious, and with the population growth expected in the district, the work will become even more of a challenge and a concern.

"Take plan reviews alone," the chief explained. "Each structure, each neighborhood requires a specific plan review. The design of the houses, how wide are the streets, how close is each house to a fire station? This is very time-consuming work, which falls directly upon our fire marshal."

The other three areas of strategic plan focus, while always subject to improvement, Healy deemed in better shape today. Operationally, he said that the station 46 negotiations forced him to

learn intricate details of the MOFD coverage area. "That was a very enlightening process for me," said the chief.

Great strides have been made in rebuilding community relationships, "particularly through the community exercises and drills we have conducted, including at Saint Mary's," he said.

And the district finances appear to be stabilized, with two straight Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports under its belt, and a 10 percent reserve reported in the district general fund. The district updates its long-range financial plan twice a year.

The chief said that work on the plan will continue through the spring, and he expects to present a draft to the board this summer.

"It will be a high quality document that will focus on things that I think we should focus on, aligned with our core values and our district mission statement," he said.

Moraga

Moraga Inches Toward Enrolling

... continued from page A5

Conversely, if residents decide to exit the MCE contract to go back to PG&E it does not cost them anything. To re-enter the renewable energy contract, the residents have to wait a year, a condition imposed by PG&E.

Reached after the meeting, Linda Staaf, a member of the Lafayette Environmental Task Force, indicated that her city had also been grappling with not knowing what is down the road and being locked in a long-term contract. "On Monday (Jan. 25) the council unanimously adopted the first reading of the resolution requesting membership in Marin Clean Energy," she says. "The council members had discussed the Contra Costa County's plan to put a CCA together and didn't want to turn their back on that, but they also realized it would be far more expensive to join a new CCA." The fact that MCE is waiving the \$15,000 joining fee for new cities until the end of March also played a role in Lafayette's decision to join, she says.

The Moraga council members noted that many variables are in the hands of PG&E since the utility company has the monopoly for the transport and delivery of the electricity. Recently the company has increased the surcharge it taxes CCA members from \$5.5 to \$11 per month. MCE is challenging



Where does MCE energy come from this decision, but they confirmed that they cannot guarantee that they will remain less expensive than PG&E. There are two levels of residential rate plans for users when a city is an MCE member: "light green" that includes 56 percent of renewable energy, and "deep green" that includes 100 percent of renewable. That second op-

tion costs about \$5 more a month. There are two CCAs active in the PG&E service area, MCE and Sonoma Clean Power. MCE city members all have one voice on its board as long as decisions are a consensus; when it is not the case, city votes are weighted according to the amount of electricity the city uses. The councilmembers were

quick to note that Moraga would not be very powerful compared to a city like Richmond. The councilmembers unanimously agreed to send the letter of intent, but councilmember Wykle recused himself since his company contracts with PG&E. More discussion between MCE and staff will develop.

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