



**Fire Districts**

**Public Meetings**

**Moraga-Orinda Fire District** Board of Directors  
 Wednesday, May 4, 7 p.m.  
 Sarge Littlehale Community Room  
 22 Orinda Way  
 Orinda, CA 94563  
 For meeting times and agendas, visit [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org)

**ConFire** Board of Directors  
 Tuesday, May 10, 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:  
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**New Medic Units for Moraga-Orinda Fire District**



From left, Daryle Balao captain-paramedic; Matt Lopez firefighter-paramedic; Chris Davies engineer; Vince Matulich captain-paramedic; Tim Williams engineer; Lucas Lambert firefighter-paramedic; Anthony Grgurevic firefighter; Lucas Trumpf firefighter-paramedic. Photo Andy Scheck

Two new International TerraStar medic units, designed by Leader Ambulance in Los Angeles, were placed in service May 1 by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. “We responded to complaints about an uncomfortable ride, and the fact that the old ambulances were not properly designed for our roads,” said firefighter-paramedic Matt Lopez of the district apparatus committee. “We chose and designed ambulances to give us the longest service life and requiring the least amount of maintenance.” —N. Marnell

**MOFD Avoids Drama, Sells Lafayette Property**

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District will make a handsome profit on its recent real estate holdings, based on offers from private citizens it accepted for property it owns at 1035 Lorinda Lane in Lafayette. The move avoids a possible dispute over an easement request by the City of Lafayette.

The district had purchased the property in 2013 for \$1.2 million as a fire station site but decided not to build there; it then split the property into two parcels and put them on the market. Fire Chief Stephen Healy on April 27 announced pending sales prices of \$1.25 million for the house and \$449,000 for the vacant lot.

Apparently potential buyers did not blink at a special easement request by the city.

The city had pressured the district to obtain easements for a

hiking trail on the outskirts of the MOFD holdings. The right of way requested by Lafayette runs atop ones already granted for roadway and utility use along the Lorinda Lane parcels, but the district did not want to risk compromising the sale of the property with the addition of another easement.

Lafayette offered the district \$10,000 for the easements. Healy and city manager Steve Falk negotiated a contract specifying terms of the transfer, and the chief presented the contract to his board at its April 6 meeting.

The reaction was not positive.

One-time board member Dick Olsen, out of concern for both the privacy and security of the Lorinda Lane residents, and also for how the price of the trail easements might negatively impact the future

value of all easements granted in that neighborhood, urged the board to vote no.

Lorinda Lane resident Mark Debusschere pleaded with the district to not make the deal. “I assume the city is extorting the district to get these easements,” he said. “I wouldn’t sign this at all. If you made this same request of the new property owner, what do you think they are going to say?”

The issue has become a matter of public controversy, director Brad Barber said. “To the extent that this matter is drawn out by the city of Lafayette in its desire to obtain the easement, we face the likelihood that the value of the property will be impaired.”

MOFD counsel John Bakker said that the city could get an injunction to preclude the sale of the

property.

“That would be a hostile act,” director Fred Weil said. “I would hope they understand our situation and react like decent human beings.”

Weil also noted that Lafayette could condemn the property for public use any time it chooses, but to this point, why hadn’t it done so? The city said it would be challenging and time consuming to secure the easements from private owners, which is why it pushed for acquisition from the district.

The board declined to grant the easements but will revisit the motion at its May 4 meeting.

Any concerns the district had about diminishment of value of its property because of the easement request likely have been obviated by the strength of the initial offers.

**MOFD Holds Open House to Mark Wildfire Prevention**

By Nick Marnell

To recognize National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District will hold its biannual Open House May 14 at Station 45 in Orinda Village.

MOFD firefighters, staff and management, plus representatives of outside agencies like Pacific Gas and Electric and the East Bay Municipal Utility District — and yes,

Smokey the Bear, too — will be on hand to explain what they can do to help you prevent wildfires.

“With all of the rain we’ve had this season, it’s never too early to work on your weed abatement,” said MOFD fire marshal Kathy Leonard, and she will tell you everything you need to know to protect your property from wildfires — and to avoid receiving a nasty letter from the district in late June because of out-of-control weeds.

Firefighters, decked out in their wildland gear, will pull out the Type 3 engine, a shorter, squattier vehicle used to fight wildfires and seldom seen traversing the streets of Moraga and Orinda. They will explain the differences between the Type 3 and the regular engine, and demonstrate the special equipment the Type 3 carries.

But the event will not be all work.

“It’s a great time for everyone,” Leonard said. “The firefighters love meeting the kids.” And there will be plenty for the kids to do, includ-



Future firefighters try out the driver’s seat. Photo courtesy MOFD

ing seemingly every small child’s dream: to sit in a fire engine.

Firefighter David Mazaika will bring his super-customized grill to station 45 and cook links and dogs and burgers, with all proceeds for the barbeque going to the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Even the Contra Costa County Animal Services Department will set up, showcasing cats and dogs available for adoption. Agency representative Steve Burdo promises a

reduced adoption fee for all attendees.

“Let’s break the Orinda open house record of 500 this year!” said district clerk Grace Santos, who organizes this event as well as the Moraga Open House and Pancake Breakfast during National Fire Prevention week in the fall.

The event runs from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday, May 14 at MOFD Station 45, located at 33 Orinda Way in Orinda Village.

**ConFire May Start From Scratch on Station 16**

By Nick Marnell

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District will consider a tear down and rebuild of fire station 16 in Lafayette, according to upcoming fiscal year budget documents the district submitted to its board.

ConFire planned to rehab the structure but after receiving numerous construction proposals decided that it may be best to bulldoze the station and start from scratch. “If I had my way, that’s the way we’d go,” Fire Chief Jeff Carman told his advisory fire commission in April.

The reversal of the Lafayette fire station rebuilding plan is analogous to the turnaround of ConFire, which barely resembles the struggling district that Carman took over two-and-a-half years ago.

ConFire was on the brink of a financial inferno in 2013. It had closed seven engine companies, stopped filling firefighter vacancies, was running up to a \$10

million structural deficit and was perilously close to exhausting its fund balances. The county administrator warned that the district was headed toward bankruptcy.

The budget presented for the 2016-17 fiscal year recommends funding for 25 fire stations, 26 companies, one squad and 353 full-time employees, including a new assistant chief of emergency medical services. By the end of the fiscal year the district will have placed 13 new fire engines, four trucks and three other vehicles into service.

ConFire can restore these resources thanks to projected revenue of more than \$123 million, nearly \$30 million more than three years ago, due in large part to increased property taxes and first responder fees.

A major step in the district turnaround took place Jan. 1, when ConFire became the county’s exclusive operator of emergency ambulance service — not including

the areas covered by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District.

“That was the highlight of the year,” said Carman. Though the new program was expected to run cash-negative for several months, the first quarter appeared to finish strong. “It’s better than we expected in terms of revenue,” said the chief. The upcoming fiscal year will include the first complete 12-month cycle of ambulance operations.

The district will also ramp up its involvement with two county departments next year. ConFire plans to provide additional staffing for the county sheriff’s helicopter program, and to work more closely with the county Hazardous Materials Division. Carman ran the Hazmat Division when he worked for the Roseville Fire Department.

The chief said he hopes to present a proposal for fire station 16 construction to his board May 10.