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Published May 18th, 2016

ConFire Board Approves Complete Rebuild of Fire Station 16

By Nick Marnell

Western Lafayette residents moved one step closer to full fire service coverage May 9 when the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District board unanimously approved the total rebuild of fire station 16 on Los Arabis Road.

The fire station was seriously damaged in 1989 by the Loma Prieta earthquake and the crews worked out of a mobile home on the site for more than 20 years before the facility was shut down in 2012. When a proposed joint venture with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to build fire station 46 at the Orinda-Lafayette border collapsed, ConFire determined that rebuilding station 16 from scratch was the most appropriate solution for the western Lafayette area. The district had considered refurbishing the existing structure but decided it was not cost effective to do that.

Fire Chief Jeff Carman explained to the board why the Lafayette station was the first to be put back into service of the four stations closed by the district in 2012. "Lafayette is one of the few areas in California located in a very high fire hazard severity zone," he said. "If we had a fire in those hills it would be similar to the Oakland Hills fire. Property values are extremely high and egress routes are extremely limited." Carman stressed that the county could be devastated economically if the Lafayette area remains without adequate fire protection.

"We stand behind the chief," Lafayette fire commissioner Bill Granados said. "Rebuilding station 16 is the best thing for the district at this time."

Deputy Chief Lewis Broschard told the board that the construction estimate ranges from \$3.5 to \$4 million, including design, engineering and other soft costs, with completion likely in 18 to 24 months. ConFire will staff the station with transferred firefighters from station 1 in Walnut Creek and an additional captain, which will increase district operating costs \$1 million a year.

"I would have been fine with station 46, but we will end up with better coverage for Lafayette," board chair Candace Andersen said.

The city of Lafayette planning department and ConFire will hold a joint public meeting to receive feedback from the neighborhood on the design of the new station at 7 p.m. May 25 at the Lafayette city offices, 3675 Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Suite 240.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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