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Alex Evans Won't Run Again for MOFD Board

By Nick Marnell



Alex Evans Photo provided

Alex Evans made his decision the day before the deadline to file candidacy papers with the county. That Thursday, Aug. 11, the Division 5 director of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District opted to not run for reelection.

"I don't have the time required to commit going forward," Evans said. "I loved the job and felt we made real progress on financial sustainability. It was just time for me to move on."

Evans is the president and cofounder of EMC Research, a firm that specializes in polling, focus groups and public opinion research consulting for a wide range of clients across the country, including Sutter Health and Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. Evans' heavy workload, especially in major election years, had been taking away from his time to serve on the MOFD board.

A good labor contract, hiring a great fire chief and the prefunding of district health care costs Evans ranks as top accomplishments during his four-year tenure with the district. He added that the reduction of district staffing from 19 daily on-duty firefighters to 17 was an important step toward the financial sustainability of MOFD, though the sentiment to reduce staffing was not shared by the entire board.

"I've been accused of caring about nothing but money," Evans said. "But the bottom line, it saves us money."

Not closing the deal with the county on the fire station 46 joint venture with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District was Evans' biggest frustration. Indeed, at every vote taken by the MOFD board on either the merger or the property purchase for the proposed station site, Evans voted yes.

"We could have done fine with just that one station," he said, as the proposed station was expected to save MOFD \$1 million a year in operating costs.

Some Orindans are frustrated by a perceived tax inequity in the district, and Evans, whose division includes part of Orinda, agrees that if Orindans think they shoulder an unfair financial burden, it needs to be considered and dealt with for the long-term viability of the district.

But Evans insisted that the biggest threat to the long-term viability of the district is its unfunded pension liability, which totaled \$28 million as of December 2014. The district awaits an updated figure from its retirement fund manager, and officials fear the liability may increase.

That financial headache tops the list of challenges for either Craig Jorgens or Victoria Smith, candidates to replace Evans on the MOFD Division 5 seat this November.

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[back](#)

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