



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors Wednesday, July 19, 7 p.m. Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors Tuesday, July 11, 1:30 p.m. Board Chamber room 107, Administration Building, 651 Pine St., Martinez For meeting times and agendas, visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

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MOFD chief ordered to cut district expenses

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board ordered the fire chief to cut more than \$400,000 of operating expenses and slash \$100,000 of projected overtime before it approves the 2017-18 district budget. The cuts would reduce costs in the two categories to match their 2016-17 actual expenditures.

“This budget does not reflect the long-term needs of the organization,” Director John Jex said at the June 21 district meeting.

According to its 2016 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, the district recognized \$67 million in long-term debt, which included

its net pension liability and net retiree health care liability. Fire Chief Stephen Healy presented the draft of a 15-year facilities plan to the board in May that included more than \$13 million in mainly capital expenditures.

With general and capital fund balances for 2017-18 projected at slightly over \$10 million, the board objected that the proposed budget did not do enough to address those long-term liabilities or capital requirements. “It does not provide for contingencies that will invariably come up,” Director Brad Barber said. “We must build our reserves and aim for financial

responsibility to our employees and the public.”

The district forecast a 3.5 percent general fund revenue increase for the next fiscal year, with operating expenses to rise 21 percent. That \$500,000 cut out of overtime and operating costs could be used to help lower the district long-term debt, the board intimated.

“Give me 30 minutes and I’ll find the \$400,000,” Director Craig Jorgens said of the operating budget cuts. He urged the chief to rethink even items like \$7,500 for color printing cartridges. “Any area where the district can be thrifty and practical,” Jorgens said.

The MOFD operating budget includes expenses other than salaries and benefits, which rose 7 percent, mostly according to terms of district labor agreements.

Directors Kathleen Famulener and Steve Anderson voted to approve the budget as presented, suggesting that the chief return to the board with amendments. “I have a hard time approving something that I do not agree with,” Jex said, as he, Jorgens and Barber voted against the proposed budget.

Healy said that he will bring revised numbers, with options, to the board in July.

Lafayette ConFire commissioner Granados retires

By Nick Marnell

After 15 years of service to the citizens Lafayette, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District commissioner Bill Granados will step down June 30. ConFire management and the board of directors honored Granados at the June 13 district meeting.

“He has fulfilled the mission of a fire commissioner more so than any fire commissioner I have worked with in my entire career,” Fire Chief Jeff Carman said. “He’s been supportive of the district, and he has tried to pull together all of the commissioners and directors of the county.”

District 2 Director Candace Andersen praised Granados for his involvement and engagement. “You are what we want of all of our fire commissioners,” she said.

Granados correctly predicted that the fire board would vote against a joint venture between ConFire and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to build a fire station in western Lafayette and he has urged the rebuild of Fire Station 16, which the district expects to complete in early 2018.

For his last official act Granados, on behalf of the advisory fire commission, recommended that ConFire dedicate rebuilt Fire Sta-



Bill Granados, center, holding two plaques, honored by ConFire directors and officers.

Photo Nick Marnell

tion 70 to the memory of Capt. Matt Burton and engineer Scott Desmond, who died in the line of duty July 21, 2007. The district board unanimously approved the recommendation.

“Being a commissioner is what you make of it yourself,” Granados said in his final comments to the directors. “I enjoyed everything that I did.”

Upon Andersen’s recommendation, the Board of Supervisors appointed Matt Guichard to replace Granados as District 2 fire commissioner. Guichard, founder of Northern California law firm Guichard, Teng & Portello and a former alternate fire commissioner, steps in July 1. “I’ve known Matt for many years and he brings a thoughtful,

balanced approach to issues. He’s an excellent communicator and will be another strong leader for the fire commission,” Andersen said.

Subsequently, District 2 alternate commissioner Erling Horn resigned. “As a Vietnam-era Navy veteran, I must follow military protocol and step down,” Horn said.

Blaze behind Campolindo sparks fears



This aerial shot shows the damage from the June 19 blaze.

Courtesy the MOFD drone

A spectacular four-alarm fire charred 16 acres of vegetation above Campolindo High School June 19. The blaze shot so high in such difficult terrain

that hand tools and hoses were rendered practically useless, and the fire required an air attack. “It was the most extreme fire behavior I have seen in this district,”

said Capt. Steve Gehling, a nine-year veteran. Fire Chief Stephen Healy said that no structures were ever in danger.— Nick Marnell

Gold Star Families



Photo provided

Sutherland served at age 19 in the Army Air Corps from November 1942 to October 1945, initially based near Chichester, England, working with British air-sea rescue, and then for 21 months in Europe.

Sutherland has been playing trumpet with The Big Band for almost 30 years and is a 35-year resident of Rossmoor. He credits his long life and good health to playing the trumpet, which he says expands the lungs.

“I am happy to get a chance to support and play some music and appreciate the veterans for their service,” says Sutherland.

As well as reading the names of the 23 fallen from Contra Costa County since 9/11, 17 from Alameda County will also be recognized.

In addition to Gold Star families, also represented at the concert will be Blue Star Moms, the Marines Memorial Club of San Francisco, Rides for Veterans, the Mo-

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bile Vet Center, Veterans of Foreign Wars and many other groups who will honor veterans from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as active duty military personnel.

Residents should plan on bringing their own food to enjoy. The concert will take place on the stage a short walk east of the parking lot. Golf cart transportation will be provided for those who require assistance.

“Jay and I are happy that we have a way to say thanks,” says Levich. “Thanks to all who have served and thanks to those who were in harm’s way and thanks to the Gold Star Families for the ultimate sacrifice – thanks with our hearts and prayers.”

For Vega, events such as the Tribute to the Troops provides soothing. “Knowing that our children’s sacrifice will not be forgotten.

“For us, that is our request – don’t forget our children.”

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