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EBMUD rate hike

Seemingly resigned to the rate increase was Sue Porter of Orinda. "No, I'm not surprised," she lamented. "And after how hard we worked to save water."

EBMUD spokeswoman Andrea Pook blamed the drought for one-third of the rate hike, with infrastructure needs accounting for one-third and operational expenses for the remainder. "A drought is difficult for everyone," she said. "We're still seeing the impacts — like water quality."

Pook said that the recent high levels of trihalomethanes in the Orinda water supply and the sour taste of Lamorinda water in 2015 were coincidental to the rate in-

crease and not veiled threats to users. "The taste changes were a result of the drought," she said. "And the rate increases affect everyone, not just customers in Lamorinda." The district plans treatment additions at the Orinda and Lafayette Water Treatment Plants to address what it calls disinfection byproduct formation.

Some took the rate increase in stride. "If they're repairing old pipelines, I'm all right with that," said Nancy N. Hom of Moraga. "As long as they maintain a hardship exemption for those who cannot afford the increase." EBMUD offers a Customer Assistance Program to help pay a portion of the

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water bill for qualified low-income residential customers.

For the average single-family customer who uses 200 gallons of water per day, the bills will rise approximately \$4.34 per month this fiscal year, and by \$4.63 per month next fiscal year, according to the district. Sewer rates will rise 5 percent each year as well, but EBMUD does not have wastewater customers in Lamorinda.

Pook confirmed a sliver of good news for Lamorindans: The district did not raise the \$7 daily parking rate at the Lafayette Reservoir. "And tap water still runs about a penny a gallon," she said.

Rescue One anniversary

Rescue One's roots can be traced back to one day in 1976. Jean Kirsch's husband cut his leg with a power saw and was bleeding profusely. Jean Kirsch called an ambulance while a local Emergency Medical Technician tried to stop the bleeding. The ambulance had to come from Walnut Creek — it took 30 minutes to arrive. Gordon Nathan, a volunteer firefighter and now board member of Rescue One, remembers that Kirsch almost died.

The scare spurred his wife and other residents into action. They decided that they needed a rolling emergency room available locally at all times.

Jean Kirsch, Jerry Mayer, Linda Borelli and Yvette Nance were some of the founding board members of Rescue One. At the time Borelli was president of the Moraga Service League, and that group was asked if they would raise the money for the first ambulance. Borelli, who has been on Rescue One's board almost continuously since, remembers going door to door asking everyone to chip in \$1 to fund the first vehicle. Rescue One also paid for the training of the first firefighters who volunteered to become paramedics.

When Orinda joined Moraga to form MOFD, Dr. Eugene Gottfried joined Rescue One's board, along with other Orinda residents. He remembers the pre-MOFD time when he needed an ambulance that took 45 minutes to come to his residence

and then got lost on its way to the hospital. Gottfried is Rescue One's current president. He explains that the foundation is funded mostly by unsolicited donations from people who were rescued by MOFD ambulances.

Nathan confirms that the group decided not to solicit donations, and he gives the example of the family and friends of Reed Austin Whittaker that made a donation of \$13,000 in memory of the young man who was killed in a tragic automobile accident five years ago. Several organizations also support Rescue One such as the Moraga Country Club, which asks its residents every year if they want to contribute, and Moraga Royale, which raises money for the foundation.

Over the years, the foundation has donated \$417,000 to MOFD. It funded an automated LUCAS chest compression system. Gottfried remembers that about five years ago, just after the LUCAS was purchased, MOFD used it to save the life of a bicyclist who crashed after suffering a heart attack. Money was also used to purchase the first Jaws of Life, a hydraulic apparatus used to open crashed vehicles in order to free people trapped inside, the first a fire district ever owned. MOFD was also the first district to get shoring equipment to allow rescuers to safely attend to people injured in a landslide. The foundation also funded a Zodiac water rescue boat for the

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San Pablo Reservoir, which is part of MOFD's jurisdiction.

One of the latest donations was used to purchase a drone equipped with infrared cameras that is used in search and rescue missions and is capable of dropping a small first aid kit or miniature AED. The drone was used in the recent Campolindo fire to detect hot spots in the hills. Gottfried noted that MOFD was one of the first agencies to get such a device.

The fire district staff makes requests to the foundation and the board members see if it fits its mission of medical emergency, as well as its budget. The board also wants to support the education of the paramedics. For example Rescue One funded the equipment of an education center within Station 45 in Orinda.

As it marks its 40th anniversary, Rescue One continues to fund equipment and training so medical emergencies are responded to in the two communities with trained professionals equipped with cutting-edge, life-saving equipment.

The 40th anniversary will be celebrated all year long. The Town of Moraga honored the foundation at a recent council meeting with a proclamation, Rescue One was in the Fourth of July parade in Orinda, and it is showcasing its history at the MOFD open houses.

Orinda

Orinda school bus routes

Worth reiterated that in fact the El Toyonal route, the most challenging, has been operating safely for 20 years with only a couple of minor accidents. When questioned when the safety of the Orinda routes was called into question, Cooper stated that he was hired during the 2014-15 school year and received concerns from drivers. In reviewing the routes, he observed conditions that concerned him, and communicated his concerns to his superiors and to the school bus program.

Bob Smith, a California licensed engineer, pointed to the relative risk of students riding in safe school buses or riding in private cars or even walking. He called it a purely legal question and said that the board was trading the children's safety for a tiny bit of liability. Laura Allaire, the Wagner Ranch school bus liaison, drew the board's attention to the high number of students

who will be adversely impacted by the changes: 10 percent of Wagner Ranch Elementary School students and 15 percent of Orinda Intermediate School students. She noted that even many private cars cannot navigate El Toyonal without crossing the double yellow lines from time to time.

Tracy Hampton, who lives on Brookwood Road, noted that Durham School Services operates a school bus on the same route. There are other options, she said, urging the board to adopt an extension to allow time to find them. Darren Cook said any potential benefits of the changes outweigh the risks. "Do you trust the methods and expertise of the consultants?" he asked. "Would you bet a child's life on it?"

But the board was left with the reality that school starts in about a month and First Student would not operate the routes. So the subcom-

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mittee was formed, and will look at a host of potential improvements, from moving stops to having the buses turn around on private property offered by homeowners for the purpose, to investigating other providers and other equipment. Gerson seemed to sum up the spirit of the meeting, stating, "What is best for the kids, not what is best for our bottom line."

After the meeting, disappointed parents were heard to be discussing the possibility of a private contract with Durham to safely get their children to school.

The revised SBC study can be found at this link:

<http://nebula.wsimg.com/3ad6bbcd908f087af78682aee4a5e5b9?AccessKeyId=ACBAD635E8DD86102CE4&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

Correction

In our July 8 article entitled "County Planning Commission OKs Saranap Village," the Lamorinda Weekly incorrectly identified Paula Santi's affiliation. She is with the Saranap Village Steering Committee. We regret the error.