



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Oct. 18, 7 p.m.
Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, Nov. 14, 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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...thanks

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MOFD to add firefighters, but no full-time ambulance for Orinda

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District accepted a federal grant in September that will allow the district to add four firefighters over three years, but the district will not use the funds to restore a full-time, dedicated ambulance to Fire Station 45 in Orinda.

The \$1.4 million Staffing for Adequate Firefighter and Emergency Response grant, authored by Interim Fire Chief Jerry Lee, covers 75 percent of the costs for years one and two and 35 percent for year three for the additional firefighters.

Lee requested in the grant application that the money be used to fully staff Medic 145, which is currently cross staffed by the Station 45 engine company when the two principal district ambulances are deployed. He explained that adding the ambulance to Orinda will help reduce the city's overall response times, which lag those in Moraga by two minutes or more, and will help address the tax equity situation of Orinda residents paying the district a higher share of property tax than do the residents

of Moraga.

By using the grant money, should the district have restored full-time Medic 145 service into Orinda, MOFD costs would have increased \$344,000 for two additional daily staffed positions over three years. With the district maintaining its current daily staffing level of 17 over the same period, expenses will drop by nearly \$1 million.

Capt. Mark McCullah, newly elected district union representative, pushed for restoration of the full-time ambulance. "The grant

was written for a reason, and should be accepted for that reason," McCullah said. Acceptance of the award does not lock the district into how it uses the money.

The board voted unanimously to accept the SAFER grant but the district will maintain its current staffing model, eschewing the additional full-time ambulance for now. The chief said he will return to the board with an updated staffing analysis for 2018, likely when MOFD places its new truck into service in the spring or summer.

MOFD firefighters take on larger roles with their labor union

By Nick Marnell



Anthony Stephens

The management of Local 1230 of the United Professional Firefighters of Contra Costa County will feature a strong Moraga-Orinda Fire District presence with the recent election of MOFD firefighter-paramedic Anthony Stephens and engineer Daniel Elbanna to the executive board of directors.

Under the leadership of President Vince Wells, Local 1230 includes firefighters from six fire districts and fire departments in the county, with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District accounting for the largest number of rank-and-file members, nearly five times the number who work for MOFD. It makes the Oct. 1 ascendancy of Stephens and Elbanna to the five-person executive board even more impressive.



Daniel Elbanna Photos Nick Marnell

"The Moraga-Orinda guys wanted to get more involved with the union, and people were confident in those two," Wells said. "They are well respected by the membership."

Stephens, in his role as vice president, works closely with Wells and the district union representatives. His duties include participation in contract negotiations and representing the union in meet-and-confer efforts with fire agency management.

As secretary-treasurer, Elbanna, among his other union responsibilities, manages the local's \$500,000 budget. "He and I sign the checks," Wells said.

"The union does so much for us and I wanted to give back," Elbanna said. "There is a lot to know about

union activities and it will be beneficial for me to learn and to be able to contribute to a strong union."

Stephens was recently the Local 1230 secretary-treasurer and he is also president of the Moraga-Orinda Professional Firefighters Association. "There is more to the life of a firefighter than just fight-

ing fires," Stephens said. "Being involved with the community and with the membership has always been important to me."

Firefighter-paramedic Lucas Lambert and newly elected Capt. Mark McCullah are the union representatives for the 52 MOFD firefighters.

Orinda resident named ECCFPD fire chief



Photo courtesy ECCFPD

Orinda's Brian Helmick was named the fire chief of the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District on Oct. 2. Helmick had been interim chief since the March

departure of Fire Chief Hugh Henderson.

The Miramonte High School grad started in the fire service with the old Moraga Fire District and served through the consolidation into the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. Helmick began his ECCFPD career in 2002 as a firefighter and progressed through the ranks as battalion chief, operations chief and interim fire chief.

"I will forever be grateful to the men and women of MOFD, as the time they invested in me built the foundation for my 21-year fire service career," Helmick said. "I will always have a special place in my heart for the communities of Moraga and Orinda and the members of MOFD." — Nick Marnell

Smoke puts a chokehold on Lamorinda

The air quality district asked residents to avoid adding additional air pollution by curtailing air polluting activities such as wood burning, driving, barbecuing, lawn mowing and leaf blowing.

Pets were included in the smoke advisories. "Especially small pets," said Capt. Lisa Martinez of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. "Just like small people, they should stay inside and not be exposed."

Firefighters spend much of their working life in smoky conditions, but the unhealthy air impacted even them. "I've never seen anything like it," said Moraga-Orinda Fire District firefighter Mark DeWeese, an assistant football coach

with the Campolindo High School junior varsity. "I took my 4-month-old son to football practice but we had to go inside the gym. School would not allow us to play outside."

DeWeese agreed that wearing a mask was not helpful but he said he did not do things much differently, except maybe stay inside more. "Instead of running around the Lafayette Reservoir, maybe I'll do my work on the 24 Hour Fitness treadmill," he said.

Unlike the September hurricanes that made news in Texas and the southeast, the natural disasters that strike the Bay Area offer no warnings. Wildfires and earthquakes come without notice, and

when they do, those in danger must act quickly. Access to an emergency notification system behooves Lamorinda residents.

Nixle is a national mass emergency notification provider. Text your zip code to 888777 for instant messages via phone, email and web from government agencies.

Designed by a fire chief of the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District, Pulse Point is a mobile phone app that allows you to receive alerts on fire department responses and emergency medical service calls. You can even listen to the live public audio safety feeds.

The Contra Costa County Community Warning System alerts residents and businesses that are in the

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crosshairs of an emergency with a message that includes basic information about the incident and what specific actions are necessary to protect your life and health. Register at the Community Warning System website for notifications on your mobile phone.

Yes, the North Bay fire could happen in Lamorinda. ConFire Chief Jeff Carman explained to his advisory fire commission the topographical similarities between Santa Rosa and cities in his district, and the chief has often said that Lafayette, with its proximity to a virtual urban forest, concerns him more than any other area of his jurisdiction.

This time, it was only smoke.

EBMUD to jumpstart tower repairs

The third option, and the one under review by the DSOD, was to install a base isolation device within the tower; in short, to separate the tower from its foundation,

which would absorb the energy and minimize the earthquake force transmitted to the tower. Think of riding in a car over a rough, rocky road. The suspension absorbs the shock of the rocks and the potholes and cushions the blows inside the vehicle. San Francisco and Oakland city halls are constructed on base isolators.

As the district and the DSOD analyze the base isolator alternative, Irias said EBMUD is lowering the reservoir water level 5 feet from its current depth of 445 feet.

The base isolator option would preserve the visual appearance of the tower, a consideration for the city. "Because it is a community icon ... it would be ideal if the existing tower could either be retrofitted or rebuilt to bring it up to an excellent rating while retaining our beloved tower's architectural form," said City Manager Steve Falk, though John Coleman, EBMUD board member, emphasized that design is less important than the safety of those who live downstream of the reservoir.

Alison Kastama, EBMUD

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manager of public affairs, said the district intends to be conscious of community concerns over the planned modifications and she promised plenty of community outreach before any tower construction begins.

Lafayette Council Member and EBMUD liaison Cameron Burks met with Coleman and requested that EBMUD provide a Lafayette Reservoir construction fact sheet for residents. The district complied and posted information on the city of Lafayette website.

Moraga Center Specific Plan

He showed the council pictures of the Summerhill Development on Camino Ricardo, which has an important visual impact on the skyline from the scenic corridors, and warned that with the proposed new zoning rules his own developments would reach the same height. He asked that the council work with him and define the easy things to do to implement the specific plan.

Council member Dave Trotter asked that the council not pay Opticos any extra money to finish the zoning project at this time, and recommended the zoning process be put on the back burner for six months.

The council did not support Council Member Kymberleigh Korpus' suggestion of a moratorium on any development in the MCSP

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until the zoning was approved. Instead, the council followed Vice Mayor Roger Wykle's recommendation to have the council work with the property owner and the public during ad hoc study sessions to continue to refine the MCSP and decide on some macro issues such as densities or setbacks. No dates were discussed for future study sessions.