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MOFD cautiously welcomes in the new year

By Nick Marnell



Superior Court Judge John Kennedy, left, swears in new MOFD Fire Chief Dave Winnacker at the Hacienda de las Flores. Winnacker's wife, Corrie, looks on. Photo Nick Marnell

Station 43 on budget and on time," said Barber, stopping short of promising a completion date. He noted that the Local 1230 labor contract is also a top priority and Barber said the district looks for a smooth, fair process during negotiations. The current contract with the firefighters expires at the end of June.

"From where I sit, Station 43 is the most pressing district need," said Fire Chief Dave Winnacker, sworn in at the Dec. 20 district meeting. "If not properly managed in a hands-on manner - by me - there could be a less than desirable outcome." Neither the chief nor district union representative Lucas Lambert would comment on labor negotiations.

Also for the new year, Barber said that he had not forgotten about the low water pressure delivered by many fire hydrants in north Orinda, but that the problem was more complicated than he originally thought because of the unclear timeline for the East Bay Municipal Utility District to upgrade the hydrants. "Should the public have to wait 20 years? We may need those resources," said Barber, citing the concern of a North Bay-type wildfire in the north Orinda area.

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board moved on from a difficult 2017 by ushering in a change in district leadership, including the election of board officers, retention of a new law firm and the approval of a contract for the recently hired fire chief.

It was one bit of bad news after another in 2017 for MOFD, which fired its auditor over misapplying \$20 million on the district financial reports, was stunned by the unexpected departure of its fire chief and experienced numerous setbacks in the construction of Fire Station 43 in Orinda. Newly elected board president Brad Barber said that potential litigation over the fire station chaos helped convince the district that it needed a law firm with public real estate experience, and MOFD hired San Francisco-based Renne Sloan Holtzman Sakai LLC as district counsel effective Dec. 20.

Barber named the rebuild of the Orinda station as one of his top goals for the district in 2018. "We want to do everything possible, as quickly as possible, to finish

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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