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## MOFD to add firefighters in time for fire season

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board authorized Fire Chief Dave Winnacker to hire six new firefighters, which, barring any sudden departures, will boost to 58 the number of district fire suppression personnel by the beginning of the fire season in July.

Four of the firefighters were technically approved in 2017 as part of the district \$1.4 million Staffing for Adequate Firefighter and Emergency Response grant that MOFD accepted in September. The four were to begin the Alameda County Fire Department Academy in January but Winnacker said that one recruit dropped out. The district was able to replace the dropout from its 2017 hiring list.

The two additional MOFD hires will enter an academy put on by the city of Alameda in April.

Winnacker explained that the addition of a firefighter costs \$18,000 more per year than using an employee on overtime to perform the same work. But the chief said there are hidden costs to excessive overtime that contribute to the potential for injury and a potential decrease in efficiency. "One single shift of overtime means an 80-hour work week," Winnacker said.

The firefighters union affirmed its position on MOFD staffing at the Jan. 17 district meeting. "Our expectation is that the board approves a move to a 19 daily staffing model and to fully staff the second district ambulance," Vince Wells, Local 1230 president, told the board.

The union complained in October about what it determined was the district misuse of the SAFER grant funds. "The grant was written for a reason, and should be accepted for that reason," Capt. Mark McCullah, MOFD union representative, said at the time. The grant was written by Battalion Chief Jerry Lee, who requested that the funds be used to fully staff Medic 145, but the acceptance of the award did not lock the district into how it uses the money.

Winnacker said that the hiring authorization had neither a positive nor a negative impact on the district staffing model, including the full-time staffing of a second district ambulance.

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[back](#)

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