



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors
 Wednesday, May 16, 7 p.m.
 Wednesday, June 6, 7 p.m.
 Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors
 Tuesday, May 22, 1:30 p.m.
 Board Chamber room 107, Administration Building, 651 Pine St., Martinez
 For meeting times and agendas, visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

Questions arise over MOFD financial strategy

By Nick Marnell

The amount of money the Moraga-Orinda Fire District proposes to pay into its pension and retiree health benefit stabilization funds came under scrutiny at a May 2 public workshop, the timing questioned with firefighter contract negotiations underway.

In order to mitigate the oftentimes wild fluctuations of the required payment to fund its employee retirement plan, the MOFD board in 2017 established a pension stabilization program, an irrevocable trust fund designed to pre-fund pension costs and offset net pension liability. The district had entered into a similar program in 2015 to pre-fund its other post-employment benefits – retiree health benefits – and to offset its OPEB liability.

The district contribution to each trust fund in 2017-18 was \$374,000. In the proposed 2018-19 budget, MOFD suggested increasing the OPEB contribution to \$440,000 and the retirement fund contribution to \$1.1 million. As of June 30, the district recognized \$32.5 million in net pension liability, 16.4 million in outstanding pension obligation bonds and \$15.2 million in OPEB liability.

Former director Dick Olsen, while supportive of the district's drive to pay down those unfunded liabilities, cautioned the board that it was risking too much by contributing so much to those trust funds. "It is apparent to me that both the timing and the magnitude of the actions that the draft budget proposes

to immediately implement in order to address those problems could, unintentionally, end up depriving the board of the ability to address the firefighters compensation needs – which needs I personally deem to be an equally high priority," Olsen wrote in a letter to the board.

Firefighter and former union representative Mark DeWeese had supported the district plan to pay into those trust funds, but not so much this time around. "What's making you confident and bullish enough to put four times the money into an aggressive stock portfolio in an irrevocable trust at this time?" DeWeese asked the board. "Or is there a more coincidental timing issue of why you want to take so much money out of the reserves?"

Olsen and DeWeese received board support from Director Kathleen Famulener, who disagreed with making an increased contribution to the trust funds. "All of this money needs to be available and in the pot for good faith labor negotiations," she said.

"Those are issues that are certainly on my mind and I think on the minds of the other directors," President Brad Barber said. "They are difficult decisions and I hope that we can weigh them all carefully."

The proposed budget will come back to the board on May 16. The district labor agreement with its firefighters expires on June 30.

Lafayette ambulance service unaffected by state bid-rigging allegations

By Nick Marnell



ConFire ambulance parked in the Kaiser Walnut Creek emergency room bay on May 7, 2018. Photo Nick Marnell

Lafayette residents will notice no change in their emergency medical service as a result of allegations of anti-competitive practices made against Contra Costa County EMS by a state agency, according to Contra Costa County officials.

Ambulance transport service for most of Contra Costa County was provided by American Medical Response through 2015. When the county EMS agency opened up bidding on a new deal, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District teamed up with subcontractor AMR in order to leverage their

combined experience and resources to secure the contract. The district and three private ambulance companies attended a bidders conference in March 2015, and only the ConFire-AMR Alliance submitted a proposal to provide ambulance service. The county Board of Supervisors, which doubles as the fire district board of directors, awarded an exclusive five-year contract to the Alliance in November 2015.

Ross Elliott, executive director of the California Ambulance Association, said that a small private ambulance company that wanted to bid complained about the county re-

quest for proposal process. "If you read between the lines, the county said that AMR was their partner at the bidders conference. The deck was stacked," Elliott said. "If a small company already knew the outcome, why would they spend up to \$40,000 to respond to an RFP? It put a chilling effect on competition." Elliott would not identify the ambulance company that fingered the Alliance.

The complaint reached the California Emergency Medical Services Authority, and in April the authority alleged that the RFP process conducted by the county EMS agency, in collusion with ConFire and AMR, stifled competition due to bid rigging. The state agency withdrew its approval of the 2015 RFP for the county EMS plan and declared the Alliance operational areas nonexclusive, effective immediately.

Contra Costa County appealed the decision, saying the EMSA had no authority to rescind its approval of the RFP and that the state agency abused its discretion and exceeded its jurisdiction by designating county operating areas as nonexclusive.

The county also called the allegations made by the California Ambulance Association unfounded. "In Contra Costa County, all contracts relevant to the provision of ambulance services in the County were approved at noticed public meetings, and all steps in the ambulance procurement process occurred openly and transparently, at public meetings," Sharon Anderson, county counsel, wrote in an April 26 letter to the EMSA.

Despite the state agency decision to curtail exclusive Alliance ambulance rights, competitors have not flocked into Lafayette to respond to emergency medical calls. "This action has no impact on the high-performing EMS system we've been providing for almost 30 months," ConFire Chief Jeff Carman said. "When Lafayette residents dial 911, they will see the same ambulances provided by ConFire and there will be no changes to the system."

Nor will the state action have any impact on Moraga or Orinda ambulance service, which is provided by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

- ◆ HARDWOODS
- ◆ CARPETS
- ◆ RUGS
- ◆ LINOLEUM
- ◆ TILE
- ◆ LAMINATE

FAMILY -OWNED
30 YEARS !

3344 Mt Diablo Blvd
in Lafayette
925-284-4440
lamorinda floors.com

LAMORINDA FLOORS
Karastan GALLERY

TAXI BLEU

All Airports Served 24/7

Dispatch: **925-849-2222**
 Direct: **925-286-0064**
www.mytaxibleu.com
mytaxibleu@gmail.com



Near-record attendance at MOFD Open House



Photo Nick Marnell

From left, new probationary firefighter-paramedics Andy Kalenian, Ben Guthmiller, Thomas Schwedhelm and Mike Stiehr, were among the near-record 648 attendees at the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Open House May 2 in Orinda. Fire Chief Dave Winnacker welcomed the four as they move into front line service. "The reports of their performance

during a challenging four month academy match the high expectations the organization had for this group and we are confident they will continue to perform at a high level," Winnacker said. "With the approach of fire season, the boost in staffing is timely as we anticipate yet another busy summer and fall." – N. Marnell

It's a wrap!

"For me," says Peacock, "The images on the utility boxes celebrate the world around us and feature plants, animals, houses, people, water, green hills, and even the stars and planets above us."

Horn says that marrying the kids' art to large vinyl panels was not easy, "But Janice and her consultant did a magnificent job," he says.

The art is being wrapped around city-owned traffic signal control cabinets with the logos being ap-

plied to the smaller control boxes.

The city works department cold-water cleaned the first set of boxes near the Bank of the West at the corner of Lafayette Circle and Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Sequoia Graphics applied the first set of vinyl wraps on May 2.

And there are more to come – nine boxes in total. Residents will spot them installed at various downtown locations on Mt. Diablo Boulevard over the next few days.

... continued from page A2

Horn says the wraps should last about a year.

It has taken cooperation from many groups to make this happen. Horn says that Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson provided help with vendor selection, adding, "We could not have pulled this off without the crucial help of Myrna Kimmelman at LPIE and Lafayette City Council funding."

And that's a wrap.

Orinda's Gilmore moves on

Of course, she'll still have close ties to Orinda, because she'll be dropping her son, a student at Miramonte High School, off at school everyday on her way from their home in El Sobrante to work in downtown Oakland. No stranger to Oakland, she lived there in her 20s when she was first out on her own, and now her

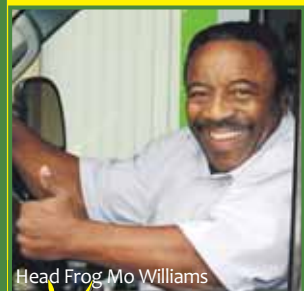
mother lives in Oakland. One of the things that pleases Gilmore is that she will be working at the architecturally significant Oakland City Hall in the Uptown District.

City Manager Steve Salomon says that he won't be filling Gilmore's position because his priority is to strengthen the city's financial team. There is currently

... continued from page A6

a half-time position he'd like to bump up to a full-time position. Salomon is okay with Orinda's role as a city where people polish their skills before moving on to a bigger city. On the other hand, he notes, Drummond Buckley, director of planning who worked for Orinda and then left, eventually returned.

LeapFrog Plumbing



Got gas? Many people think plumbers deal only with water and sewage. Not true! We install and repair all types of gas lines and fixtures too.



Mo's sizzling summer specials...

- Outdoor kitchens
- New gas lines for cooktops and dryers
- Fire pits & patio heaters
- Pool heaters & hot tubs
- Natural gas barbecues

We're poly-pipe certified, (better than iron)
 Approved vendors of PG&E

LeapFrog Loot \$25 off

Any plumbing job

LeapFrog Loot \$100 off

Gas line installation over \$600

LeapFrog Loot \$150 off

Tankless water heater installation

*1 coupon per service, exp. 7/31/18

We Hop To It!

Family-owned and serving Lamorinda since 1993

green solutions!



(925) **377-6600**

www.LeapFrogPlumbing.com

