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ConFire dodges bullet at Station 16 site

By Nick Marnell



The root of the problem. Photo ConFire

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District avoided a major headache pertaining to Fire Station 16 construction when the city of Lafayette agreed to issue a permit for the district to remove two oak trees from the station site. Had the tree removal not been approved administratively by the city planning department, a public hearing may have been necessary, which would have delayed construction for months.

"ConFire has gone to every extent possible to retain the trees," city planning technician Chris Joram said. "The trees really limited the district's construction ability."

The issue was the sheer number of oak tree roots penetrating the footprint of the structure, forcing workers to dig trenches for the foundation by hand. "We just could not put our building there," Assistant Fire Chief Aaron McAlister said. Two oak trees had to go, but they were protected by city ordinance.

Lafayette officials and fire officials met May 23 and solved the problem. The city agreed to issue a tree-removal permit for the two oak trees, and the district will mitigate their removal by increasing the number of trees to 17 that it will plant on the station site, an increase of two over the original landscaping plan. Had the district not agreed to plant the additional trees, it could have made an in-lieu \$3,945 payment to the city to be used in

its tree education and planting program.

McAlister said that the trees, which ConFire will plant where the construction trailers now sit, will actually enhance the landscape of the station. "And our neighbor loves the idea," he said.

The two oak trees should be removed by the end of May, posing no construction delays, according to Deputy Fire Chief Lewis Broschard.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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