

Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors

Wednesday, Dec. 19, 7 p.m.

Nov. 21 cancelled

Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org



ConFire

Board of Directors

Tuesday, Jan. 15, 1:30 p.m.

Board Chamber room 107, Administration Building, 651 Pine St., Martinez. For meeting times and agendas, visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.



New MOFD board defies tradition, elects Danziger president

By Nick Marnell



New MOFD board, from left: Michael Donner, Craig Jorgens, Steven Danziger and Greg Baitx. Missing: John Jex
Photo Nick Marnell

The three newly elected, union-supported members of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District governing board made an immediate impact Dec. 5 by shattering tradition and electing newcomer Steven Danziger as president of the district board of directors.

A stunned silence followed director Michael Donner's motion to nominate Danziger, and when Room No. 7 of the Orinda Community Center sprung back to life, speakers bashed the action as dangerous and irresponsible. One member of the public stoked the fears and the rhetoric that suffused the November election campaigns. "I find it disturbing," he said. "I'm concerned with the idea that the union is taking over the board and taking over the fire district."

Possibly sensing a runaway train heading his way, Local 1230 President Vince Wells attempted to quell the uprising. "I don't want this election to be the union versus other candidates," Wells said. "Decisions should not be made based on who supported which candi-

dates. I would hope that no members of the board – including the ones we supported – will operate from that platform."

The MOFD board elects officers at the end of every year, and traditionally, though not a district bylaw, the vice president is elected president for the succeeding year. There have been exceptions, as when former director Alex Evans turned down his nomination for president in 2014, citing an extremely heavy workload at his market research firm during an election year. Had precedent been followed, the 2019 board president would be John Jex.

"There are good reasons for tradition," cautioned one speaker. "Learn how all of this works before taking on a leadership role." The rotation of the role as president is a politically neutral mechanism, offered another speaker, stressing that with everyone given a chance to be president, contention is avoided.

Kymerleigh Korpus, Moraga town council member and MOFD liaison, agreed on the likelihood of contention. She warned that

when traditions were not followed in Moraga, divisiveness and anger among town council members soon followed.

So why did Donner, a retired Oakland firefighter well versed in the nuances of the fire service, break with tradition and nominate Danziger? "Fire is steeped in tradition, and I normally honor that," Donner said. "With Steve, I made an exception. We worked together in Oakland for 20 years, and I know how well he comports himself. He is very composed, and he will be a great leader."

Despite a final plea by director Craig Jorgens to honor tradition, the board elected Danziger president by a 3-2 vote, with Jex and Jorgens voting no and Greg Baitx joining Donner and Danziger, the three union-supported directors, to vote yes.

In 2018, through November, the MOFD board voted on 28 agendized items and split only five times. The cohesiveness of the new board will be a development to watch closely throughout 2019.

MOFD elections: Firefighters union achieves 100 percent ROI

By Nick Marnell

Voters in the Moraga-Orinda Fire District rejected the notion that a candidate backed by the firefighters union would present a conflict of interest as district director by placing three union-backed candidates on the MOFD governing board in the November election. The three new directors, comprising a board majority, took office Dec. 5.

The firefighters union contributed more than \$30,000 to back the campaigns of Greg Baitx, Steve Danziger and Michael Donner, who defeated candidates Nathan Bell in Division 1, Steve Anderson and Red Smith in Division 3, and Lucy Talbot in Division 4. Opponents of the union-backed candidates raised less than half that amount, with incumbent Anderson reporting no campaign contributions.

Rarely has one board seat been contested in any election in the district's 21-year history, let alone the three this year. Not only did the elected directors benefit from the political campaigns but so too did district residents, who were treated to analyses of fire issues they may have never understood or even heard about in their lives. Discussions on topics like net pension liability, adequate staffing, response times and tax equity bombarded local media outlets for months. The electorate, which disregarded the endorsement of Bell, Smith and Talbot by a competing regional newspaper, was likely the best informed ever in the district.

In Division 1, voters chose Baitx, a firefighter with the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, whose family has a history

in Moraga and in the fire service. Danziger, a retired fire department administrator, won the Division 3 seat by the widest margin of the three. And Donner, businessman and retired firefighter, eked out a 123-vote victory in Division 4.

For Bell, it was his second try at securing a district board seat, having lost to Kathleen Famulener in 2014. "It was an honor to participate in the democratic process. I thank all who supported my candidacy. Congratulations to Mr. Baitx," Bell said.

Talbot also remained gracious in defeat, promising to continue to make her voice heard. "I plan to be involved in MOFD citizen committees to help communicate the financial standing of the district, and progress implementing critical programs – such as prevention – our citizens have been asking for," she said.

The most startling outcome occurred in Division 3, where Anderson's six-year term on the board ended abruptly after his third-place finish. "It's clear that money talks," he said. "I never realized that on the local level." But Anderson took full responsibility for his defeat, saying that he dropped the ball by not confirming that he was even going to run until it was too late to secure endorsements.

Donner dismissed the idea that he owes the firefighters union for its financial support. "I think the public believes that we are individual thinkers and not in the union's pocket," Donner said of the three new board members.

Anderson, who spent hours coaching and mentoring the newly elected directors, concurred. "I believe they are prepared to do what's right for the district," he said.

ConFire Chief Jeff Carman to depart in March

By Nick Marnell

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Chief Jeff Carman announced his retirement to his staff, officials and district residents on Dec. 7.

"It is with mixed emotions that I write this message to inform all of you that I plan to retire on March 29, 2019," wrote the chief. "This year marks my 35th year in the fire service. It has been an incredible career highlighted by being the fire chief of ConFire for the last five and a half years. In that time, we have accomplished incredible things together, and, while I still enjoy coming to work and being a part of this organization, I think it is a good time for me to move aside and allow new talent and ideas into the organization. Over the course of my career, I have worked for fire chiefs who stayed too long, and I would prefer to end my career on a positive note rather than overstay my welcome."

Carman took over a troubled fire district in October of 2013 and directed ConFire to such financial and operational success that he was named California Fire Chief of the Year in 2018. Among his many achievements are the formation of the Alliance, a public-private partnership that provides ambulance transport service in most of Contra Costa County, beefing up the dis-

trict hazardous materials response program and the rebuilding not only of a fire station but of district relationships with the city of Lafayette.

"City staff was tough but fair," Carman said. "Withdrawing from the joint fire station project with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District was ultimately the right decision and I am anxious to be here for the grand opening of Fire Station 16 next year. I think that decision showed the city of Lafayette we were committed to providing the best possible service to them and was a step in the right direction."

The chief praised his staff and recognized the organization, which he touted as morphing from a reactive organization to a more strategic one, anticipating customer needs and assuring that those needs were met when issues arose. "As a result, I am confident that I can leave the organization knowing that it is on a good path and has a bright future," Carman said.

Over the next four months, the chief plans to come to work every day just as he has for the last five years. "There are still many things I would like to accomplish before I go, and I will continue to work hard to complete those things before I leave. Until then, I look forward to continuing to be the fire chief of this district," Carman said.

Police Departments

Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report

Nov. 20 - Dec. 3	
Alarms	21
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	7
Traffic	46
Suspicious Circumstances	8
Suspicious Subject	6
Suspicious Vehicle	5
Service to Citizen	32
Patrol Request/ Security Check	37
Supplemental Report	15
Welfare Check	3

Vehicle violations

Excessive Speed	Moraga Rd./Alta Mesa Dr.
	Moraga Way/Miramonte Dr.
	Moraga Rd./Draeger Dr.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	1000 Block Country Club Dr.
	1000 Block Larch Ave.
	100 Block Fernwood Dr.
Reckless Driving	Canyon Rd./Camino Pablo
	Rheem Blvd./Moraga Rd.
	Campolindo High School
	Moraga Way
	Moraga Rd./Campolindo Dr.
Traffic Hazard	St. Marys College
	Moraga Rd./Corliss Dr.
Vehicle Theft	10 Block Francisca Dr.
Other criminal activity	
Fraud False Pretenses	20 Block Carr Dr.
Grand Theft Other	600 Block Rheem Blvd.
	CVS
Petty Theft	10 Block Fieldbrook Pl.
	600 Block Augusta Dr.
Rape	St. Marys College
Sexual Exploitation	40 Block San Pablo Ct.
Trespass	10 Block Mayfield Pl.
Vandalism	Joaquin Moraga Int School
	Los Perales Elementary School
	Moraga Rd./Alta Mesa Dr.
	800 Block Camino Ricardo
	1900 Block Ascot Dr.
Nuisance to the Community	
Drunk In Public	600 Block Moraga Rd.
Harassment	100 Block Paseo Del Rio (2)
Loud Noise	Miramonte Dr./Ivy Dr.
	Villa Ln./Hardie Dr.
	800 Block Villa Ln.
Loud Party	10 Block Miramonte Dr.
Public Assembly Check	Rheem Valley Shopping Center (2)
	Safeway
	Moraga Commons Park
Public Nuisance	1900 Block Joseph Dr.
Other	
Threats	40 Block Blaine Ct.
	Violation Custody Order
	1700 Block St. Andrews Dr.

ORINDA POLICE

Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report

Nov. 11 - Nov. 17	
Alarms	21
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	4
Traffic	27
Suspicious Circumstances	1
Suspicious Subjects	3
Suspicious Vehicles	3
Patrol Request/ Security Check	8
Service to Citizen	32
Supplemental Report	11
Vacation House Check	7
Welfare Check	1

Vehicle violations

Auto Burglary	10 Block Altarinda Rd.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	La Espiral/Las Vegas Rd.
Occupied Stalled Vehicle	Vashell / Moraga Way
Reckless Driving	Camino Pablo/Miner Rd.
	Camino Pablo/Brookwood Rd.
	Camino Pablo/Eb Sr 24
	San Pablo Dam Rd./Bear Creek Rd.
	Orinda Theater
Traffic Hazard	Bear Creek Rd./San Pablo Dam Rd.
	Camino Sobrante/El Caminito
	Glorietta Blvd./Rheem Blvd.
	80 Block La Espiral
	Camino Pablo/Eb Sr 24
	10 Block Acacia Dr.
	Moraga Way/Brookwood Rd.

Other criminal activity

Burglary	20 Block Orinda Way
Fraud Credit Card	70 Block Barbara Rd.
Petty Theft	100 Block Estates Dr.
Petty Theft From Veh	70 Block Underhill Rd.
Residential Burglary	200 Block Sundown Terrace
Warrant Arrest	10 Block Orinda Way

Nuisance to the Community

Battery	200 Block Camino Sobrante
Disturbance-Domestic	20 Block Orinda Way
Loud Noise	100 Block Lucille Way
	Charles Hill Pl./El Nido Ranch Rd.
Loud Party	Glorietta Blvd./Moraga Via
School Assembly Check	Sleepy Hollow School
	MHS (2)
Verbal Dispute	10 Block Southwaite Ct.
	500 Block Miner Rd.

Other

Accident Injury	Camino Pablo/Santa Maria Way
Missing Adult	10 Block Crown Ct.
Possession Of Burg Tools	Wb Sr 24 at Wilder Rd.

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