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Fire Station 16 in Lafayette will not let Carman go quietly

By Nick Marnell



Fire Chief Jeff Carman, left, addresses members of the ConFire Advisory Fire Commission Photo Nick Marnell

Talk about going full circle.

Fire Chief Jeff Carman's final Advisory Fire Commission meeting evoked memories of his first meeting with the commissioners more than five years ago in that a problem regarding Lafayette was on the table. In 2013, the subject was the possible Lafayette detachment from the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District over the city's frustration with the closure of Fire Station 16. On Feb. 25, the issue was the Pacific Gas and Electric Company's causing a potential delay in the station reopening.

No detachment occurred, of course, and the ConFire board in 2016 agreed to not only reopen Station 16 but to tear down the existing structure and build a new station from scratch. Construction has moved along, albeit slowly, for three years, with the district shooting for an April occupancy.

But a PG&E inspector balked at the placement of some of the power equipment at the station, despite the utility having already approved the model in use, according to Assistant Fire Chief Aaron McAlister. "If they hold their ground, that is a major problem," McAlister told the commission.

Of concern to the utility is the location of the meter, which ConFire places inside each of its fire stations. "PG&E wants the meter outside the building, so they can have access," McAlister said. "But a fire station is different from a residential structure. A fire station is open 24 hours, every day, and PG&E can access our meters anytime.

"It's nothing different than what we have done at any of our other stations."

McAlister said that negotiations with the company are ongoing, and he is clinging to the April occupancy date that Carman relayed to the fire commissioners.

Carman retires from the district March 29, possibly days before the reopening of the fire station.

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[back](#)

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