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## MOFD fire flow tax unchanged for 2019-20

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District May 15 held its fire flow tax for fiscal year 2019-20 to \$0.06 per fire flow unit, a rate the district has not exceeded since its 1997 inception.

A fire flow tax quantifies the risk of fire to a parcel. MOFD uses a complex formula to determine the number of fire flow units allotted to a parcel, but key variables in determining the figure are parcel size, the installation of a sprinkler system and construction type. In short, the more of a fire hazard a property is, the more "fire flow" - water - is needed to save it.

The history of the MOFD fire flow tax is nearly as complex as its formula.

In 1980, voters in the Moraga Fire Protection District, to make up for district revenue lost due to Proposition 13, passed a special tax "not to exceed 6.0 cents" per fire flow unit, with proceeds used to fund operations and capital needs of the district and for other expenses "deemed necessary by the Moraga Fire Protection District." Twelve years later, Moraga residents voted to increase the tax to a maximum of \$0.30 per fire flow unit.

As a condition for the 1997 consolidation of MFPD and the Orinda Fire District into MOFD, Orinda voters passed a fire flow tax as well, but the 1997 ordinance said that the Orinda rate "shall not exceed 6 cents" per fire flow unit. Orinda residents never voted to increase the maximum Orinda fire flow tax, and MOFD has declined to raise the Moraga fire flow tax above the \$0.06 that Orinda pays, let alone to \$0.30.

The failure of the district board to raise the Moraga fire flow tax adds to the inequity some Orinda residents feel about the tax burdens placed upon each municipality for services received, as Moraga residents pay 19 percent of their property tax bill to the district while Orindans pay 23 percent, according to the latest MOFD Municipal Services Review. "We don't allocate our services based on what city it is," Board President Steven Danziger said. "Some people just don't seem to understand that."

The district projects fire flow tax revenue for 2019-20 at \$548,000 from the Orinda Service Zone and \$536,000 from the Moraga zone. Orinda resident Steve Cohn appealed unsuccessfully to the MOFD board that "if the rate for the Moraga Fire Flow Tax was increased to the statutory limit of 30 cents, this would generate an additional \$2.1 million of revenue," which he proposed could be used for added fuel mitigation efforts.

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[back](#)

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