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Brush Clearance per Fire Regulations

Special Council Meeting outlines wildfire preparedness and response



Image provided

Fire service preparation and planning made a difference in 2020, when fighting brush fires like this one.

By Lou Fancher

At a special Lafayette City Council meeting May 17 addressing 2021 wildfire preparedness and response, robust communication efforts proved to be as important as vegetation mitigation, fire breaks, fire-fighting equipment, access road maintenance and other proactive fire prevention measures.

During the Zoom webinar, PowerPoint presentations were given by the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, Lamorinda CERT, the Lafayette Emergency Preparedness Commission, the East Bay Municipal Utilities District, Pacific Gas and Electric Company and Lafayette Police Department.

Mayor Susan Candell began the meeting saying, “It’s never too late to start” paying attention to wildfire season. Chief of Police Ben Alldritt followed Candell with comments emphasizing the importance of cooperation and coordination of the entities represented. Increasingly, as the fire season

accelerates in duration and severity, “It’s never too early to start,” might also apply. Residents and agencies must not silo, but work in combination to keep communities safe and informed, he said.

ConFire Deputy Fire Chief Aaron McAlister along with Chris Bachman and Jeff Peter addressed planning, preparedness, prevention and emergency response initiatives. McAlister called last year’s “career fires” the new normal. These “career” or mega fires are sometimes spread over a million acres and the Lafayette community is within range of several high-fire areas.

Mentioning this year’s drought, McAlister said preparedness – grass and vegetation mitigation – in 2020 “paid off.” Last year’s lightning-caused fires, he said, were unusual, but the risk of pole-related fires continues to be a concern. Added engines and other fleet resources and hiring an extra dispatch person (funded by resources issued from the state) are recent im-

provements. After Fire Station 16 was reopened in 2019, Crew 12 was doubled up to increase from one- to two-hand crews, which work seasonally and use hand-held tools to assist. With increased aerial fleet assist possibilities, more network cameras under ALERTWildfire and the high enrollment of residents in the Community Warning System, McAlister said people partnering with public safety agencies is key to being prepared and safe.

Duncan Seiber of Lafayette CERT said there are 19 evacuation zones in the city. CERT teaches people to be prepared because when a disaster strikes, he said citizens (not firefighters) are the first on-site responders. To that end, CERT has sold over 20,000 emergency drinking water drums (191,300 gallons) to residents. “We sell them three times a year, the program really took off big time,” said Seiber, who emphasized the need for residents to register for emergency notifications issued by Nixle as well as turning to Lafayette’s AM 1670 emergency alert radio station during emergencies and the standardized Channel 123 that connects all of Lamorinda. CERT’s Zoom and in-person meetings held on the second Monday night of each month inform and update people about the latest developments and conditions.

PG&E’s presentation by Senior Public Safety Specialist Les Putnam and Public Affairs Representative Mark van Gorder brought out the most heat during the three-hour meeting. Following information regarding Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS), equipment maintenance and additions to the PG&E website aimed at improving communication with residents during emergencies,

Council Member Cam Burks was not satisfied.

When Council Member Gina Dawson asked about transformers and other equipment failures, Putnam said such failures are “unfortunate parts of the system.” A suggestion was made by van Gorder for residents to phone the PG&E 800 number and also to call and process a ticket with the city to report the date, time and location of equipment problems.

“My community doesn’t want to hear about processing a ticket for another failure of your utility agency that has a track record of monumental failure in our community and throughout California for the last five to eight years,” said Burks. “We don’t want to hear, ‘That’s just how it is,’ with infrastructure that’s failed over the years.”

He said the hubris of PG&E representatives’ replies were “beyond reproach” and the community had very little trust in the utility company. He called their community response and utility company “broken.”

Questions posed by members of the public – after Burks asked if the meeting was meant to serve the public or to be “a policy talk” – centered on fire mitigation activities in specific corridors in Lamorinda and oversight of fire code compliance for new developments.

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein said the efficacy of last year’s fire mitigation efforts during “record breaking times” provide a snapshot glimpse of the future. A creek fire in August 2020 near Fresno was a single-ignition fire and resulted in 387,000 acres burned. It was the largest-ever single-ignition fire in California. With residents living in areas that used to be grassland, dairy farms and orchards, Rein said there is increasing risk to the Lafayette community and preparedness is ever more essential.

A key resource mentioned repeatedly throughout the meeting was the Lamorinda Residents Guide to Wildfire Preparedness and Evacuation, which can be picked up at the police department or the local library. Residents can register with ALERTWildfire and the Community Warning System, which can provide text alerts about emergencies, at <http://www.alertwildfire.org/southeastbay/> and <https://cwsalerts.com/>.

The meeting remains available for viewing on the City of Lafayette’s YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UCBPuox8U4xResM-Pv4T_bSJw). All of Lafayette’s council members were present at the meeting.

Fire District Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District
 Board of Directors
 Wednesday, May 19, 6 p.m.
 For meeting times and agendas, visit www.mofd.org

ConFire
 Board of Directors
 Tuesday, May 18, 1 p.m.
 For meeting times and agendas, visit www.cccfpd.org



Public Safety

Emergency response:
 Emergency: 24 Hours 911
 Police Dispatch: 24 Hours
 925-284-5010

Nixle: Text your zip code to 888777 or go to www.nixle.com

Lafayette Police Department:
 3471 Mt. Diablo Blvd. 925-283-3680
 Chief of Police, Ben Alldritt
 925-299-3221

Police Department Tip Line
 94549Tip@gmail.com
 Police Department Traffic Issues
 94549Traffic@gmail.com

Moraga Police Department:
 329 Rheem Blvd., 925-888-7055
 Chief of Police, Jon King ext. 7049

Orinda Police Department:
 22 Orinda Way 925-254-6820
 Chief of Police, David M. Cook
 925-254-6820

Orindatip@cityoforinda.org

Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report

May 2 - May 15
 Alarms 48
 911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 10
 Traffic 66
 Suspicious Circumstances 7
 Suspicious Subject 22
 Suspicious Vehicle 15
 Service to Citizen 49
 Patrol Req./Security Check 46
 Public/School Assembly Check 1
 Supplemental Report 24
 Vacation House Check 11
 Welfare Check 25
 Ordinance Violation 2

Vehicle violations

Auto Burglary
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. 1St St./Golden Gate Way
 4100 Block Hidden Valley Rd. (2)
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor
 800 Block Avalon Ave. (2)
 Pleasant Hill Rd./Deer Hill Rd.
 900 Block Hough Ave.
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Reckless Driving
 Reliez Station Rd./Glenside Dr.
 Moraga Rd./Tofflemire Dr.
 Eb Sr 24 At Pleasant Hill Rd.

Moraga Rd./St Marys Rd.
 Lucas Ranch Rd./Lucas Dr.
 1000 Block 2Nd St.
 Del Mar Dr./Withers Ave.
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Moraga Rd./Madrone Dr.
 Silverado Dr./Lucas Dr.

Stolen Vehicle Recovery
 Deer Hill Rd./Pleasant Hill Rd.

Tc - Property Damage
 3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 St Marys Rd./Topper Ln.
 Pleasant Hill Rd./Acalanes Ave.
 Moraga Rd./Tanglewood Dr.

Vehicle Theft
 3300 Block Betty Ln.
Other criminal activity
 Commercial Burglary
 3800 Block Happy Valley Rd.
 Defraud Innkeeper
 3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Fraud False Pretenses
 900 Block Moraga Rd.
 Grand Theft
 1600 Block Hunsaker Canyon Rd.
 3400 Block Moraga Blvd.

Identity Theft
 3800 Block Quail Ridge Rd.
 3200 Block Beechwood Dr.

Panhandling
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Petty Theft
 3600 Block Brook St.
 4100 Block Hidden Valley Rd.

Petty Theft From Veh
 700 Block St. Mary’s Rd.
 3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Petty Theft Veh Parts
 3200 Block Marlene Dr.
 3100 Block Palomares St.

Residential Burglary
 700 Block St Marys Rd.

Shoplift
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (5)
 3200 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Nuisance to the Community
 Disturbance-domestic
 900 Block 3Rd St.

Loud Music
 Barn Ln./Acalanes Rd.
 Springhill Ct./Springhill Rd.
 900 Block Hough Ave.

Loud Noise
 3300 Block Springhill Rd.
 Hidden Valley Rd./Diablo Cir.
 700 Block St. Mary’s Rd.

Loud Party
 Reliez Valley Rd./Pleasant Hill Rd.
 600 Block Lancaster Dr. (2)
 Glen Rd./Happy Valley Glen Rd.
 3300 Block Walnut Ln.
 3500 Block Rowe Pl.

Reckless Driving
 Moraga Rd./Lemire Dr., Laf.
 Campolindo High School
 Police Department
 Campolindo High School
 Canyon Rd./Camino Pablo
 Dollar Tree
 Moraga Rd./Rheem Blvd.
Tc - Property Damage
 10 Block Kimberly Dr.

Public Nuisance
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 1100 Block Cambridge Dr.
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 900 Block Moraga Rd.
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Vandalism
 400 Block Castello Rd.
 1000 Block Woodbury Rd.
 600 Block Sweet Ct.
 900 Block Acalanes Rd.

Other Harassment
 Happy Valley Rd./Bart

Unwanted Guest
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 3400 Block Echo Springs Rd.

Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report

May 4 - May 17

Alarms 19
 911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 7
 Traffic 49
 Suspicious Circumstances 4
 Suspicious Subject 3
 Suspicious Vehicle 6
 Service to Citizen 41
 Patrol Req./Security Check 12
 Supplemental Report 6
 Vacation House Check 2
 Welfare Check 5
 Public/School Assembly Check 1

Vehicle violations

Accident Property
 Moraga Rd./Campolindo Dr. (2)

Dui Misd
 Campolindo High School

Excessive Speed
 Camino Pablo/Hodges Dr.
 Larch Ave./Wandel Dr. (2)
 Moraga Rd./St. Marys @ Skate

Park
 Moraga Way/Viader Dr.
 Canyon Rd./Moraga Rd.
 Moraga Way/School St.
 Moraga Way/Ivy Dr.

Reckless Driving
 Moraga Rd./Lemire Dr., Laf.
 Campolindo High School
 Police Department
 Campolindo High School
 Canyon Rd./Camino Pablo
 Dollar Tree
 Moraga Rd./Rheem Blvd.

Tc - Property Damage
 10 Block Kimberly Dr.

Other criminal activity

Child Abuse
 1000 Block Sanders Dr.

Corporal Injury Spouse
 10 Block Roberts Ct.

Fraud Credit Card
 100 Block Quintas Ln.

Grand Theft
 Moraga Commons Park
 600 Block Moraga Rd.

Grand Theft Veh Parts
 10 Block Wandel Dr.

Petty Theft
 20 Block Hour Fitness Mor
 Not Available
 600 Block Moraga Rd.
 Moraga Way/Moraga Rd.

Nuisance to the Community
 Disturbing The Peace
 90 Block Miramonte Dr.

Loud Music
 1400 Block Camino Peral
 10 Block Windeler Ct.
 10 Block Thune Ave.
 400 Block Chalda Way

Loud Party
 100 Block Eileen Ct.
 80 Block Miramonte Dr.

Vandalism
 1400 Block Camino Peral
 100 Block Eileen Ct. (2)
 1300 Block Camino Pablo

Other Fireworks
 Camino Pablo/Sanders Ranch Rd.

Harassment
 St Andrews Dr./Moraga Way

Mentally Ill Commit
 100 Block S Sandringham

Trespass
 St Marys College

Unwanted Guest
 Cvs

Violation Restraining Order
 100 Block Cypress Point Way

Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report

May 2 - May 15

Alarms 43
 911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 10
 Traffic 28
 Suspicious Circumstances 3
 Suspicious Subject 2
 Suspicious Vehicle 6

Service to Citizen 73
 Patrol Req./Security Check 76
 Supplemental Report 13
 Vacation House Check 0
 Welfare Check 8
 Public/School Assembly Check 3

Vehicle violations

Accident Injury
 Camino Pablo/Wb Sr 24
 Glorietta Blvd./Rheem Blvd.

Accident Property
 400 Block Camino Sobrante
 10 Block Overhill Rd.
 Miner Rd./Camino Pablo

Auto Burglary
 60 Block Moraga Way

Other criminal activity
 Extortion
 10 Block Evans Pl.

Fraud False Pretenses
 40 Block Los Dedos Rd.

Grand Theft From Vehicle
 300 Block El Toyonal

Petty Theft
 Moraga Wy
 30 Block Camino/Don Miguel
 50 Block Acacia Dr.

Petty Theft From Veh
 40 Block Bates Blvd.
 10 Block Muth Dr.

Prowler Heard
 50 Block Brookside Rd.

Robbery Armed
 St Stephens Cir./El Nido Ranch Rd.

Shoplift
 Orinda Way
 Camino Pablo

Warrant Arrest
 St. Stephens Dr./Eb Sr 24

Nuisance to the Community
 Loud Music
 50 Block Brookside Rd. (2)
 10 Block Highland Ct.

Loud Party
 Ori 50 Block Brookside Rd.

Other
 Failure To Obey
 Wb Bryant

Fire/Ems Response Info
 Camino Pablo

Fireworks
 30 Block Claremont Ave.

Harassment
 20 Block La Fond Ln.