



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published June 9th, 2021

## Letters to the editor

What do the firefighters want?

Last issue's article about MOFD being absorbed into ConFire ended with "it's a dead issue".

The trouble is, the "problem" that was being addressed, has not been solved. Only one person that I heard cut to the crux of the issue and that was Orinda Council Member Nick Kosla who asked "what problem are we trying to solve?" (To which no one had a response at the time.)

But the firefighters' union president did answer that question when he was speaking in Moraga. The article quoted him saying "they (the MOFD firefighters) have some of the worst benefits". So the firefighters want to work for ConFire where supposedly they would get better benefits?

When I read this, my jaw dropped. This year, out of a \$33 million budget, MOFD spent \$29 million on salaries and benefits. \$24 million of this went either directly to or was used to fund the 51 firefighters' salary and benefits. That is an average of \$475,000 per firefighter. This isn't enough???

And even though the district pays this amazing amount, it isn't anywhere near what the District could (should?) spend because additional benefits have caused the district to go \$70 million in debt on unfunded retirement benefits.

I cannot believe that anyone, much less Contra Costa County, pays their municipal employees better, unless they are building up even more debt than MOFD.

And is this an issue? You bet it is. The firefighters' employment contract is coming up for a vote by the board. Director Baitx is a member of the same union as the MOFD firefighters. And that union spent \$30,000 to get Directors Baitx, Donner and Danziger, who have the majority vote on the board, elected in 2018. What salary and benefit increases will they want to give the firefighters who funded their election? No one knows.

But with a majority on the board, the union-supported (controlled?) board members can hand out anything they want to and we, the taxpayers, will end up paying for it now or later and at the same time being denied any other services; like fire prevention which many of us consider essential.

Steve Cohn

Orinda

A brief history on the Moraga Youth Involvement Committee

Thank you for featuring The Moraga Youth Involvement Committee (MYIC) in your May 26, 2021 edition. I was co-founder of the MYIC and I have missed reading about it and knowing what they have been doing. Kaye Yost and I created the MYIC 31 years ago in May of 1990. We established it by jointly issuing an ordinance at a Town Council regular meeting. It was to provide an avenue for young people to be able to get involved in local government and it was the first youth committee in the Lamorinda area. The name of the committee was chosen by the members who were first appointed to the committee. The original committee had a total of 18 members selected from JM Intermediate, Miramonte, Campolindo, and Acalanes. One Moraga resident represented the private schools, Kaye and I were the adult advisors, and one Park and Recreation staff member was a liaison member to the council. By now, many of the original members have families of their own and are involved in their communities.

Some of the accomplishments during our first two years were organizing the "HalloRheem" dances at the Rheem Theatre, holding pizza nights, participating with a few of Moraga Seniors at Moraga Beautiful, assisting the Moraga Junior Halloween Carnival and their crab feed which brought funds to the committee, adopting families in December, having a wrapping paper sale, working on emergency earthquake preparedness, holding a tri-community eighth grade dance, organizing a Moraga "Beach Ball" seventh grade dance, getting involved in environmental issues, and hosting over 100 high school students on a "Day on the Bay" boat dance. We also coordinated with Lafayette and Orinda a "Youth Challenge Day" involving small and large group activities, games and provided discussions on developing healthy relationships and fostering decision-making skills. T-shirts were designed, printed and worn by members when they participated in town events. Members presented end of the year reports to the Town Council.

This has been a challenging year for students and for the committee. I will be looking forward to seeing the names of the new members who will be chosen in the fall. Hopefully, we might read about the MYIC and their activities on a regular basis. One of our members wrote many press releases and feature stories about the group and went on to major in journalism in college.

Best of luck to the students as they approach another year with their association in the Moraga Youth Involvement Committee. I will enjoy following them through their website ([www.moraga.ca.us/313/Moraga-Youth-Involvement-Committee](http://www.moraga.ca.us/313/Moraga-Youth-Involvement-Committee)).

Mardi Potts, Moraga

Co-Founder and Former Advisor, MYIC

Lafayette voters deserve better legal representation

The City Attorney has failed to advocate for Lafayette for years, creating a very real problem, which needs to be remedied:

On Dec. 4, 2020, the Superior Court ordered the City to pay \$118,625 in attorney fees to residents who challenged a land-use approval by the city council on Las Trampas Road in 2016. In March 2020, the First Appellate District ruled that the city council violated the Brown Act Open Meeting Law by conducting

undisclosed closed sessions with the city attorney and staff before each of the public hearings. The City paid \$936,319 in fees - an astonishing amount five times the residents' attorney fees -- after the City Attorney refused to cease and desist from the improper practice. In fact, the City had continued holding improper closed sessions 24 more times until the appellate ruling concluded the case.

On Dec. 8, 2020, the State's Fair Political Practices Commission ruled that the architect presenting the above-mentioned application, a Lafayette Planning Commissioner, violated conflict-of-interest provisions of the Political Reform Act in 2015. The FPPC also found he committed four violations for other clients in 2015 and 2016. Previously, in 2008, the FPPC had ruled that a Lafayette Design Commissioner violated the Act by advocating for his client to his own commission. Yet the City Attorney and staff allowed the practice to continue for eight more years into 2016. In 2018, the city council introduced a stronger commissioner code of ethics. Within a week, six commissioners resigned.

In 2018, the First Appellate District ruled that the "City Improperly Interfered with the Referendum Process" by wrongly claiming that the referendum process did not apply to the Homes at Deer Hill. This ruling allowed citizens to vote on Measure L. In 2019, Save Lafayette Trees v City of Lafayette, the Appellate District rejected the City's claim that Lafayette citizens were subject to a special shortened statute of limitations to contest violation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

In light of these costly and repeated errors, voters have a right to expect the City Council to take remedial action.

Linda Reibel  
Lafayette

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA