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MOFD, ConFire chiefs update new Lamorinda lawmakers on concerns

By Nick Marnell



From left, MOFD's Stephen Healy, and ConFire's Lewis Broschard and Jeff Carman. Photo Nick Marnell

reopening of Fire Station 43 in north Orinda for sometime this fall.

ConFire is waiting on the city. The district submitted its application to rebuild western Lafayette Fire Station 16 in September, received a thumbs-up from the Planning Commission in December and awaits a decision from the Design Review Commission Feb. 27. "We have a ways to go," said Deputy Chief Lewis Broschard, who expects that the district will bid out the project by early summer.

But the biggest concern, shared by both fire agencies, is how to protect areas like Happy Valley and north Orinda from a disastrous wildfire. "We hear it time and time again," Carman said. "It's like the Oakland hills, on the dry side of the mountain. It's a recipe for disaster."

Because the topography is challenging there, as are the roads, ConFire has teamed with the county Sheriff's Department to use its helicopter to help with fire suppression. "In those hills, if we're off by just a little bit in our response, it's not like we can go around to the next block. It would be maybe a five minute drive," Carman said.

Healy explained that heavy rains beget concerns about more foliage that can act as fuels, and he described grasses in north Orinda that grew up to 11 feet high last year. "That is what late spring rains can do," he said.

The chief also advised the council members that MOFD's Dennis Rein, the Lamorinda emergency preparedness coordinator, promotes joint interagency efforts with respect to disaster preparedness.

Council members Ivor Samson and Cameron Burks of Lafayette, Kymberleigh Korpus of Moraga and Darlene Gee of Orinda attended the Jan. 31 orientation session, organized and conducted by Lafayette City Manager Steve Falk.

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