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## MOFD Passes 2009-10 Preliminary Budget

By Lucy Amaral

At its June 17 meeting, the Moraga Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) Board of Directors passed the 2009-2010 preliminary General and Special Revenue Fund Budget.

As tax revenue is stagnate and fixed costs have continued to rise, the approximately \$19 million preliminary budget was approved with the knowledge that cuts will need to be made before the final budget is approved. According to MOFD Fire Chief Pete Nowicki, the district could run a deficit of nearly \$900,000 if cutbacks are not made. Now it's a matter of what to cut and where.

Chief Nowicki was instructed by the Board to prepare various budget scenarios to counteract the budget revenue shortfall. "We will dissect the entire budget to see where the least amount of adverse affect in our operational abilities comes from," said Nowicki. "We would need to look at staffing models, and possibly the potential for suspending certain response capabilities (such as not up-staffing on red flag days)."

One area of which Nowicki is keenly protective is keeping stations open. "I would, as fire chief, do everything in my power to keep every fire station open," he said.

The already lean budget has another threat at the door with the possible suspension of Prop 1A (2004), which would then allow the state to borrow property tax revenue from local governments and special districts (such as MOFD) to offset the state's deficit. If that suspension is approved, MOFD could lose another eight percent of its property tax revenue, which equates to about \$1.2 million dollars. The money would be considered a loan, to be paid back by the state within three years.

"If Prop 1A (2004) is suspended, we would try to absorb that in our reserve," said Nowicki. "Because it is borrowed money, we have the expectation that we would be paid back in a timely fashion within the next three years, as promised."

Several letters have been sent to Governor Schwarzenegger by Nowicki on behalf of the Board and the District indicating their displeasure with the decision to suspend Prop 1A (2004). At this board meeting, Nowicki presented the board with a formal resolution which would be sent to the governor stating that MOFD would experience severe fiscal hardship if the State borrows local property tax revenue and the board strongly opposes any proposal to borrow or seize any additional local funds.

Nowicki said that the final 2009-2010 MOFD budget will be submitted to the Board for approval no later than September, 2009.

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