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## Surprise Resignations from MOFD Board

*By Lucy Amaral*

At the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Director's meeting on February 15, two members unexpectedly resigned their positions on the Board. In separate actions, Brook Mancinelli and Richard Olsen tendered their resignation, both effective February 29, 2012.

Olsen represents Division 3, which encompasses portions of Moraga, Orinda and Canyon, and has been on the MOFD Board since March of 2010. Olsen was appointed by the Board to replace Pete Wilson, who resigned due to health reasons, then ran and was reelected to the Board for a four-year term in November, 2010. Mancinelli was elected in November, 2008 and represents Division 5 in Orinda. His term was set to end in November of 2012.

"This is one of the hardest things I have ever done," Mancinelli told the Board. "This will be my last meeting. I am tendering my resignation effective February 29, 2012." Mancinelli gave no comments during the meeting as to why he resigned, nor gave any specific reason when asked later.

After requesting to speak last, Olsen told the Board that he had sadly come to a similar conclusion; however he was more vocal about the reasoning behind his resignation. Olsen said he felt the Board has become dysfunctional. "We have been working at cross purposes," Olsen said in a prepared statement. "As a result, little of significance has been accomplished." Olsen added that he felt he could better serve the interests of the community and taxpayers by speaking out publicly, without constraints.

Olsen went on to say that he had hoped that before joining the Board he could affect change by being on the inside. "After two years on this Board," he said. "I am totally frustrated - as I have not been able to effect any significant, positive changes."

Fred Weil complimented both outgoing members for their ability to bring useful perspective to the board and said he was unhappy about this turn of events. "I'm disappointed. They are both intelligent people and mean well for the District," Weil said later. "I am sorry they are not going to participate. I like them both and I respect them both." Weil added that he did receive a pre-meeting call from Mancinelli regarding the resignation.

Board members Frank Sperling and John Wyro echoed Weil's comments regarding the loss of different perspectives, however Wyro also emphasized that while the perspectives might have been different, everyone (on the Board) has worked hard on behalf of the community.

MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley later admitted to being caught off guard. "Although I had a sense that they were not always pleased with some of the actions by the Board, I was surprised that they resigned," said Bradley.

The meeting ended with the Board instructing MOFD's legal counsel and Chief Bradley to provide information on how to fill these positions. The Board meets again on Wednesday, March 7 and the subject will be placed on the agenda.

Weil said he is hopeful that whoever takes their place will have the best interest of the District and community.

"What we provide is so important," he said. "We run a fire and emergency service and whoever joins the Board will focus on helping to set policy that will preserve and enhance our services. That is our (the Board's) job."

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