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LLLCF Board of Trustees Welcomes New Executive Director

Submitted by Fran Miller



Beth Needel Photo provided

The Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation's new executive director will be Beth Needel – a non-profit professional with 30 years of expertise in leadership, development, marketing and program management.

Foundation Board President Caity Meaney Burrows said, "We are so fortunate to have Beth join the Foundation team as the new executive director. Her unique set of skills and experiences correspond won-

derfully with our three main areas of focus during the search: strategic collaboration, programming and fundraising."

A resident of Walnut Creek since 1989, Needel considers herself fortunate to have been able to work in the East Bay for high-caliber corporate and nonprofit organizations, including Barnes & Noble, Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF), and Oakland Zoo.

Serving as community relations manager for Barnes & Noble, Needel worked extensively with award-winning authors to create and manage educational programs and community events throughout the East Bay. At ARF, Needel was instrumental in the creation of People Connect, a department established to design and develop programs aimed at education, teen volunteerism, community engagement and animal-assisted therapy. Most recently she served as capital cam-

paign and grants manager for Oakland Zoo, where she raised funds for education outreach programs, and construction projects including a new veterinary hospital, a biodiversity center and the California Trail project.

"As the Foundation's new executive director, I look forward to leading the outreach effort to local residents and library users about the vast array of library programs and services," said Needel. "That effort combined with the community's ongoing financial and volunteer support will be key to sustaining this fundamental community resource. The executive director position is an honor and a wonderful opportunity for me. I'm excited to work closely with the board, Friends and our community partners who are vital to the library's success as we collaborate on the Library Foundation's future."

Needel's first day with the LLLCF will be July 8.

Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

MOFD Division 1 Board Vacancy

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District voted June 20 to fill Frank Sperling's board seat by appointment, while leaving open the option for a special election if no candidate surfaces. The district must either appoint a director by July 23 – which is 60 days from the date of Sperling's resignation – or call for the special election. If neither action is taken by that date, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors will appoint the director. "That's not going to happen," said director Steve Anderson.

The compromise motion, proposed by director Alex Evans, passed 3-1; director Fred Weil voted against. Weil strongly opposed the appointment process; he wanted the new director to be chosen only via special election. "I don't think we should be disenfranchising our voters," he said. "Representatives should be chosen by the people who live there."

The job posting for the volunteer position will close July 10. The district will review applications and attempt to appoint a new director by July 17.

No District Tax Increase

At the same meeting, with no discussion and by unanimous vote, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District held its fire flow tax rate to 6 cents per fire risk unit for fiscal year 2013-14.

The fire flow tax is a levy on district property used to augment funding for fire protection, prevention and suppression, or other district needs. The revenue traditionally is appropriated to the district's capital budget. The fire flow tax brought in slightly over \$1 million for the last fiscal year.

A fire risk unit is calculated on a formula based in part on the square footage of an improved property, its construction type and whether it contains an approved sprinkler system. In short, the higher the property's risk of fire attendant to its improvements, the higher the fire risk unit. This number, multiplied by 6 cents, equals the annual fire flow tax on the property.

New MOFD Fire Marshal

The board also unanimously approved a motion to promote assistant fire marshal Kathy Leonard to fire marshal, effective July 1. Randall Bradley, the MOFD fire chief, has been serving as the fire marshal for the past 15 months since the retirement of Mike Mentink.

Bradley said that Leonard had been taking on more and more of the fire marshal duties, which allowed him to focus on other district programs. "Based on Kathy's commitment to the organization, her knowledge of fire prevention programs and the fact that she was working beyond her job classification, she deserved the promotion and I am extremely proud of her," added the chief.

Bradley Headed Home

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"When I arrived," said Bradley, "the downturn in the economy was beginning to impact the community's confidence in the district's long term sustainability."

To help address budget shortfalls, Bradley slimmed down the organization. "I evaluated administrative functions and duties, which led to a reduction of six full time administrative positions," he said. "This effort led to the development of our Long Range Financial Plan, an achievement I am extremely proud of."

Bradley also reignited the 1999 and 2011 failed attempts at a fire station consolidation plan with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. His proposal to build a new fire station 46 at the Lafayette-Orinda border to replace a fire station from each district – potentially saving each district \$1 million in annual operating costs – was turned down by the boards of both districts. Although the proposal is again under consideration, this time by MOFD and the city of Lafayette, within four months both Bradley and ConFire chief Daryl Louder – the driving forces behind the consolidation – will have departed

their fire districts.

Bradley's efforts to put together the joint venture impressed both Louder – who praised Bradley's non-traditional thinking – and District 2 Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen. "He has been a great partner with ConFire," said Andersen. "His collaborative, innovative approach to the proposed station 46 is the type of 'thinking outside the box' we need in all of our fire districts."

Bradley's tenure was not without its missteps.

In early 2012, Bradley presented the MOFD board a plan to purchase a building in Moraga to house the district's administrative center. But negative public reaction forced the district to cancel the purchase and lose the \$25,000 deposit it placed on the property.

And in December 2012, three district firefighters were seriously injured while tending to a multi-vehicle accident on State Highway 24. A fire industry consultant recommended operational changes in the district as a result of the procedures followed at the accident scene.

Bradley leaves a district whose firefighters have been working without a contract since 2010 and without a pay raise in five years. Mark DeWeese, the MOFD Local 1230 representative, expressed the frustration of the firefighters' union. "The chief's relationship with the union has had its ups and downs over his time here," he said. "He is leaving with some major issues still unresolved that the union feels should have been taken care of a long time ago."

MOFD board president John Wyro appreciated Bradley's efforts on the Long Range Financial Plan, plus his work on the station 46 project. "Chief Bradley served us well, dealing with some very difficult times," said Wyro. "He will be missed."

The Modesto Regional Fire Authority was formed in January 2011 when three Stanislaus County fire agencies entered into a Joint Powers Agreement. The authority is governed by three boards of directors representing the three agencies to whom Bradley will report.

Bradley's final day at MOFD will be July 15.

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