

Into the Fire

By Nick Marnell

You may never guess that Stephen Healy was appointed interim fire chief of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District July 16. He hasn't ordered a fire chief badge. He has not requested a new personal vehicle. He hasn't remodeled the chief's office; in fact, he still drops into his old office at station 45 in Orinda Village.

Even if he wanted to enjoy any of those perks, he has not had the time.

"My first week, I put in 78 hours," said Healy. It was a manifestation of the biggest adjustment Healy has had to make in his new position: "Time management has been my top challenge so far," he said.

The Alamo resident, with a master's degree in emergency services administration from Cal State Long Beach, has served in the fire industry for 27 years, including the past six as battalion chief, interim fire marshal and division chief with MOFD. Healy, 46, is also an incident commander for the East Bay Incident Management Team, and he works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on its Urban Search and Rescue Task Force. He said that this operational experience, plus his knowledge of district personnel and external stakeholders, make him a strong candidate for the permanent job.

MOFD has used outside consultants to help find its past three fire chiefs. Healy agrees with that strategy if the district intends to hire an experienced chief. "But the downside is the (outside) candidate's lack of knowledge of district culture, and the length of time required to understand the issues that are important in the district," he said.

The new chief will be thrust into the most polarizing issue of the year in the district: the proposed fire station 46 consolidation. MOFD recently closed on a parcel at the Orinda-Lafayette border to be used for the construction of that station, to replace its station 43 and the closed station 16 of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. A partner must next be secured, and two candidates are in the mix: ConFire and the city of Lafayette. Healy talked about the advantages of each one.

"If we partner with ConFire, there

would be no LAFCO issues, and no hurt feelings," said the interim chief. But a partnership with the city of Lafayette would require approval of the Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission, since the city would first have to secede from ConFire. "With Lafayette, there could be more money available to the district, with more options, and economies of scale," he said.

Other major areas of focus for Healy will be the finalization of the 2013-14 district budget and the resumption of contract talks with the local firefighters' union.

There are many motivations for accepting an interim position. Employees may take an interim title to not disappoint a supervisor who recommended them. Sometimes an employee may accept the position as a temporary fix, as a favor to a governing board. Often, the staff will pressure its manager to step in to the top job. In many of these cases, the interim manager does not even want the responsibility.

When asked if he indeed wants the permanent fire chief position, Healy did not hesitate with his response. "Yes, I do," he said.

The district spent \$17,000 with executive search firm Avery and Associates in 2009 to recruit fire Chief Randall Bradley. Contra Costa County contracted with Alliance Resource Consulting LLC for \$25,000 to find the new ConFire chief.

With a successful audition as interim fire chief, Healy may have the opportunity to save MOFD that expense in 2013.



Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors Meetings

Next meeting:
Wednesday, Aug. 21

(Go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for location and more information)

Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

MOFD Board Meeting

Kathy Famulener was sworn in as the first female director of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District at its Aug. 7 meeting. Famulener is the deputy district attorney of Alameda County; she replaces Frank Sperling, who resigned in May. The new director wasted no time jumping into district operations, accompanying interim chief Stephen Healy on a wildfire response in late July. "It was great that she got to see the guys in action," said Healy.

The district also approved the hiring of Gloriann Sasser as administrative services director to replace the departing Sue Casey effective Aug. 26. Sasser was most recently the finance supervisor for the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District.

Casey, who is leaving for a finance position with the city of American Canyon, was recognized for her six years of service to the district. "I had great trust in your ability to handle our finances," said director Fred Weil. "I feel so much better about our financial situation than I ever thought would be possible."

On July 26, MOFD was awarded a \$1.15 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The SAFER grant (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) is provided to help fire agencies that are dealing with service reductions. While MOFD has not experienced any service cutbacks, battalion chief Jerry Lee authored a grant proposal indicating that there was a potential for district service reductions. It worked. The district plans to use the money to fund four firefighter positions over the next two years.

The salaries of the four new firefighters will wash with the grant money. The savings to the district should come in the reduction in overtime costs. "I did a rough calculation, and the amount we'd save in overtime is similar to the award amount," said Lee.

A motion to accept the SAFER grant passed unanimously, 4-0. Direc-

tor Steve Anderson was absent.

ConFire Town Hall Meeting

It's been a tough year for the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. Property tax revenue fell drastically through the 2012-13 fiscal year, and voters did not pass a parcel tax measure to help the district bridge the budget gap. Five fire stations were closed as a result, including station 16 in Lafayette, with one more slated for closure in January.

In February, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors approved a \$400,000 contract with Fitch and Associates, LLC, a Platte City, Mo fire consulting firm, to conduct an assessment of district fire operations. Fitch will host a town hall meeting in Lafayette Aug. 20 at which it plans to educate the public on its study and conduct a public forum.

Supervisor Candace Andersen hopes Lafayette residents will participate. "Lafayette is a valued member of ConFire," she said. "It has been directly impacted by the district's financial struggles with the closure of fire station 16. As we look for the best ways to meet both the emergency medical and fire protection needs of Lafayette, community input is very important," she stressed.

"We encourage the community to attend," said Vince Wells, president of the United Professional Firefighters of Contra Costa County, Local 1230. "The lack of community involvement throughout this whole process has been noticeable. Many do not realize the impacts of these service reductions or potential service model changes until they call 911."

The meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

New ConFire Chief

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors was scheduled to vote Aug. 13, after press deadline, on the appointment of a new chief for ConFire. Please check our website, www.lamorindaweekly.com, for updates.

NAVIGATING THE MARKET... The Right Broker Makes All The Difference

DAVID PIERCE
BROKER-REALTOR
925 . 254 . 5984

Rewarding
Real Estate Outcomes
for Lamorinda Since 1987



david.pierce@cbnorcal.com
web . www.davidpierce.net
5 Moraga Way . Orinda . CA 94563
BRE #0094185

©2013 Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. All Rights Reserved. Coldwell Banker® is a registered trademark licensed to Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. An Equal Opportunity Company. Equal Housing Opportunity. Each Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage office is owned by a subsidiary of NRT LLC. BRE License # 01908304

RESPONSIVE, ATTENTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL CARE IN THE ENVIRONMENT OUR SENIORS DESIRE MOST--AT HOME!

Call us anytime you need an extra hand. Our caregivers--all bonded and insured--lend a hand in caring for your loved ones.

- Bathing, dressing, grooming & toileting
- Light housekeeping & meal preparation
- Transportation, shopping & errands
- Medication reminders & physical activities
- Companionship & more

\$500 off
First Month of Live-in Home Care Service
WITH COUPON
offer good until 08/31/13 for new clients only



61 Moraga Way, Ste. 9
Orinda, CA 94563
(925) 317-3080
www.homecareorinda.com



SUMMER'S END SALE

FRI-SUN, AUG 23-25, 10-6

UP TO 60% OFF EVERYTHING IN THE STORE!

NEW 27.5" BIKES ARE IN!

- Huge savings on all 29er bikes
- Save up to \$2300 on 2012 bikes
- **BELL** & **Giro** helmets 30% off
- **YAKIMA** racks 20% off
- **ONGUARD** U-Locks 30% off
- Shoes up to 50% off

... AND MUCH, MUCH, MORE!!!

Print your email address below & bring this ad in during the sale to enter for a chance to **Win a 2014 Giant Revel 3 Bicycle!** (\$400 value)

Print clearly. One entry per person. Not valid with other offers. Need not be present to win. Restrictions apply. See store for details.

Shop locally from the Bay Area's oldest locally-owned bike shop!... Since 1925!

FREE lifetime service on your Hank & Frank bike!



Nor Cal's largest **KONA & GIANT** dealer!

