



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published May 21st, 2014

Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

MOFD Seasonal Staffing Increase

Because of a general fund deficit, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District lowered its daily on-duty minimum staffing level from 19 to 17 in November. But with the district facing drought conditions and the risk of a large vegetation fire, particularly in north Orinda, fire chief Stephen Healy requested a staffing increase from May 12 through Oct. 31 at the May 7 board of directors meeting. Healy specifically recommended that the district re-staff the ambulance at Orinda Village station 45 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. "It will increase the availability of engine 44 in south Orinda, which will add three additional firefighters to a vegetation fire the majority of the time," said the chief. His proposal will increase overtime charges by \$65,000 this fiscal year and \$142,000 in 2014-15. A motion to approve the staffing increase passed 4-0, with board president John Wyro absent.

MOFD Budget Workshop

After three consecutive years of General Fund deficit spending, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District presented a fiscal year 2014-15 budget with a projected operating surplus at its May 14 Finance Committee meeting.

"We were given direction to present a balanced budget for 2014-15," said Gloriann Sasser, administrative services director. "In order to do that, significant changes had to be implemented." Many of those changes resulted from the new four-year labor agreement struck by the district with Local 1230 in April; under the new contract, salaries decreased 3.5 percent for the first year and health benefits were capped at 2010 levels for active employees and retirees. The district will also continue to operate with one less division chief. As a result, salaries and overtime are projected to decrease nearly \$600,000 for the new fiscal year.

Though 2014-15 property tax revenue is projected to increase more than \$1 million, the district's retirement contribution jumps nearly \$2 million. Combined with a \$300,000 increase in workers' compensation charges - mainly due to the major accident on Highway 24 in 2012 (see our online archive for details, www.lamorindaweekly.com) - the district will use more than \$700,000 of its fire flow tax revenue to fund operating expenses.

Total district revenue for 2014-15 is projected at \$22.2 million, with total expenditures - including capital expenditures and debt service fund expenditures - equaling \$21.7 million.

Sasser also updated the district's Long Range Financial Plan. "We will have a balanced general fund, with revenue meeting expenditures in each year," she said, with the positive trend resulting from projected rising property tax revenue and lower retirement costs. Sasser also projected that the general fund balance will exceed 10 percent of budgeted general fund revenue by 2019.

"Last year we were looking into a chasm," said director and finance committee member Steve Anderson. "Labor and management have done remarkable work in keeping us from falling off the cliff."

Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force

One of the issues on which many members of the Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force agree is the completion of proposed fire station 46, a joint venture between the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. A precipitating event in the formation of the task force was the closing of ConFire station 16 in Lafayette.

ConFire chief Jeff Carman and MOFD chief Stephen Healy have said that they are very close to an agreement on the construction and operation of the new station. At the March task force meeting, however, Carman said that he was reticent to present a station 46 plan to his board when, at the same time, Lafayette was considering secession from the district. "I need to decide where to put our emphasis," said Carman.

The task force approved a draft of a resolution at its May 15 meeting to present to the Lafayette City Council affirming and supporting the concept of station 46.

"This resolution does not end our discussion of governance, modeling, financing and response

times," said co-chair Traci Reilly. "But it will be an affirmation from Lafayette that we're not packing our bags." Co-chair Brandt Andersson added, "We do want this and we think that station 46 should be built."

The draft will be presented for approval at the May 27 City Council meeting; Carman's station 46 presentation is expected to be delivered to the Board of Supervisors on June 3.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA