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MOFD fire chief the impetus behind relocation of Moraga Fire Station 41

By Nick Marnell



According to local officials, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District is under no pressure from developers or the town of Moraga to move Fire Station 41, which sits on Moraga Way next to the new Town Center Homes development.

"It's 100 percent my idea," said MOFD Chief Dave Winnacker.

Fire Station 41 was built in 1967, and according to a district 2011 Facilities Committee report, compiled under the direction of then-director Dick Olsen, the station suffered from "health and safety, gender separation, firefighter housing and other deficiencies" and needed to be rebuilt, as did the adjacent administrative and training centers.

Next in line for an overhaul Photo courtesy MOFD "Following the priorities laid out in the 2011 report I began looking at the Station 41 project," Winnacker said. "Given that the current site has always been marginal for training activities and that the report was written before the adjacent Town Center Homes project was approved, I believe it is appropriate to explore all viable options before committing significant capital resources to rebuilding or extensively remodeling Station 41."

With the limited number of buildable lots in south Moraga of sufficient size to house the fire station and training center, the chief's outreach and research narrowed the list of options to two: Remain at the current location or move to a site adjacent to the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School. Winnacker contacted Moraga School District Superintendent Bruce Burns in the fall.

"There have been informal discussions about this for years," said Burns, who noted that this time, the fire district was seriously interested in moving the fire station to the JM location. Burns said he will bring the topic to his school board at a December meeting.

The superintendent seconded that outsiders did not recommend that he make a land deal with MOFD. "No pressure, no lobbying from the town," Burns said.

Moraga Mayor Dave Trotter also confirmed that neither the town nor any developer made any demands to move the station. "The Town Council gave no such directives to MOFD, in connection with approval of the Town Center Homes project or otherwise," Trotter said.

As for the relocation of the administrative center, Winnacker spoke with John Valentine, pastor of Orinda's Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, on the idea of the church selling a portion of its property to the district. "It is something we are considering," Valentine said. The church lies adjacent to Fire Station 44 on Moraga Way.

"I understand that moving a fire station is always a sensitive issue and look forward, with appropriate board direction, to working with the public to explore MOFD's future options," Winnacker said.

No work will begin on Fire Station 41 until completion of the rebuild of Station 43 in north Orinda, expected in the spring.

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