

# Letters to the editor

## Potential MOFD financial emergency warning

Director Jex has once again asserted that MOFD is facing a "financial emergency." Since his first Board meeting over two years ago Director Jex has repeatedly stated the District faces potential "bankruptcy". In fact, on at least two separate occasions Director Jex has stated the District must be prepared to "close a Fire Station".

Director Jex has made a significant contribution to the auditing of MOFD's Financials. His skill as an auditor is non pareil. However, when Director Jex steps from the role of an auditor to one of a financial analyst, Director Jex demonstrates a lack of understating of public sector financing, our local government organizational requirements, and the key role of Contra Costa County's Teeter Plan. With multi-million dollar balances in various District

funds, Director Jex has forgotten the cardinal rule of governmental accounting; all dollars are fungible.

Since the financial doldrums of FY 2008/09,

MOFD has:

- Almost completed a new Fire Station
  - Replace several major pieces of capital equipment
  - Established two funds for the retirement of pension and OPEB unfunded liabilities with multi-million dollars balances
  - Establish a general fund balance in excess of 5 million dollars
  - Raised MOFD's ISO rating (an objective measure of the quality of a District performance
- The above are hardly the hallmarks of a public agency facing bankruptcy.

Director Jex's periodic cry of "bankruptcy ... financial emergency" is not the cry of a Cassandra

but more aptly the cry of a Don Quixote. Director Jex's periodic pronouncement does a disservice to the hard working men and women of MOFD.

Stephen Anderson  
Orinda

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# Saint Mary's College seeks job placement opportunities for its students



Photo Vera Kochan

**Saint Mary's College Graduate School Advisor Brother Glenn Bolton, FSC, EDD.**

**By Vera Kochan**

It comes as no surprise to anyone living in Lamorinda that there is a prestigious college within our midst. Looking to add another link in the town-gown bridge is Saint Mary's College Graduate School Advisor Brother Glenn Bolton.

Bolton and his colleagues in the Career and Professional Development Services Department are hoping that local residents and businesses can step up to the plate with offers of internships, full- or part-time positions, even volunteer opportunities for SMC undergraduate or graduate students looking to test the waters in various fields of employment. Says Bolton, "Safeway and some of our local restaurants have been good to us, but Moraga, as a whole, is not very aware of our program. That's why get-

ting the word out is so important."

No stranger to higher learning, Bolton himself has an impressive roster of degrees under his belt. He holds four graduate degrees in history, psychology, ethnic counseling and private school administration, as well as a doctorate in higher education administration.

In addition to Bolton, there are three other full-time staff members working with 2,700 undergraduates and 900 graduate students at the college. Bolton is the graduate and law school advisor, Director Beverly McLean works with undergraduates and especially grad students and alums for employment opportunities, Paula Conrad is the employer relations and internship manager and Vicki Crum is the marketing and career strategist.

Internship experiences in

the past have opened wide doors for SMC students, giving them invaluable footholds for careers in business, law, medicine and more. Bolton states that they are looking for "community members who can act as mentors and 'connectors' in all phases of work: law, finance, STEM, development/real estate, medicine, dentistry, marketing, banking, accounting, arts, language, hospitality, construction management, sports management, politics, IT, etc. ... basically all fields of endeavor."

The program also encourages "shadowing opportunities" to give students real-life experiences by shadowing a lawyer, doctor or banker, to name a few. A valuable asset to students, according to Bolton, would be "counseling in your area of career." Or "summer and academic semester internships/externships in a legal or medical office, company office, counseling center, town department, gallery/museum or production company."

SMC currently receives

over 50 job/internship postings a day. Each of these is meticulously screened for legitimacy. There are occasionally unscrupulous offers for job placements that turn out to be scams. However, those that do pass muster offer opportunities for internships with pay at for-profit companies. Nonprofits are allowed to post for career experience opportunities. Within the past six months, the college listed 1,500 internships, as well as 2,030 part-time, 4,630 full-time and 60 volunteer

postings.

Bolton says, "We use Handshake, a program that serves as a place where students, career centers, and recruiters come to meet, talk, and share internship, part-time and full-time job opportunities. Individuals and companies go to Handshake to post internships and jobs. Students keep their resumes on Handshake and go to the site to find internships, part-time and full-time jobs." He added, "We also just had a job fair called Hiring Now."

For more information about the program call Saint Mary's College at (925) 631-4600. To list a job, prospective employers can go to: <https://stmarys-ca.joinhandshake.com>.



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# MOFD awarded major state wildfire prevention grant

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"We're not sure how the details will work out yet. We may need to work with the city and property owners to get permits and permissions," ConFire Deputy Chief Lewis Broschard said.

That will be a concern for MOFD as well. Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said that the district will be able to mobilize immediately - "One of our strengths is our small size," he said - but the chief is preparing to face potential environmental hurdles from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Bay Area Air Quality Management and other entities.

Rapid mobilization will be critical, as Cal Fire says in its summary report that the fuel break must be completed in 2019. The project was expected to head to the MOFD board for formal acceptance of the grant money at the March 20 district meeting.

Under Winnacker's direction, MOFD has amped up its north Orinda fire prevention efforts since he took over as chief in December 2017. Working with Cal Fire, the district organized vegetation trimming along Bear Creek Road. It tested poor-flowing hydrants, and identified supplemental water sources like pools, ponds and privately maintained water

tanks. PG&E trimmed trees interfering with power lines along Miner Road, and the district tested fire detection sensors in January during a north Orinda evacuation exercise.

North Orinda residents are savvy about the need for fire prevention, and local neighborhoods are proactive, as the Orinda Downs Homeowners Association contracted for a goat herd to trim back vegetation in open space west of Happy Valley Road each of the last two years. In the 2018 general election Lucy Talbot, a businesswoman with no firefighting background, came within 123 votes of defeating a career firefighter for a north Orinda MOFD board seat, running on a platform based largely on increased fire prevention for the area, for which she continues to advocate.

"While a (fuel) break is a place to start, I have grave concerns that far too little is being done by our elected officials to address the very real threat of a fire danger to our community," Talbot said.

The North Orinda Fuel Break project will reduce fuel loads in more than 1,700 acres in and adjacent to Lamorinda. "This is a once in a lifetime opportunity - a recognition of a critical situation, and the state has opened the door," Winnacker said.

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