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## Letters to the editor

The cost of service

I disagree with the statement "MOFD Fire Flow Tax quantifies the risk of fire to a parcel" in the article about the MOFD board considering a possible fire flow tax rate hike.

The formula for the Moraga tax was an attempt, back in 1992, to allocate additional revenue (above the funds provided by regular property taxes) needed to provide premium service to the residents of the Moraga Fire Protection District (MFPD). It was called a "fire flow tax" but since MFPD did not provide the "flow" (water) to put out fires, it did not really cost MFPD anything extra to put out a little fire or a big fire. What MFPD provided was the equipment and man-power; fixed costs.

They had two stations, two fire engines, and if they needed mutual aid to put out a big fire, adjacent stations provided that aid for no cost. The same is true today.

MOFD today receives most of its revenue, \$29.3 million, from property taxes. Most of that is used for employee salaries and benefits and most of that to the three shifts of 17 firefighters and the administration required to supervise and support them.

Eight of those 17 firefighters (47% of the total) are stationed in and serve Moraga and Canyon whose population (18,000) is about 47% of the total 38,000 served by MOFD.

While MOFD does not allocate its costs between Orinda and Moraga, it is not unreasonable to assume that the cost to provide service to Moraga is 47% of the \$29.3 million in property tax revenue; which equates to \$13.8 million. This is what it costs to provide Moraga with the premium service it desires.

However, regular tax from Moraga and Canyon property owners to MOFD only adds up to \$9.6 million; \$4 million short of what it costs to serve them. The current parcel tax only adds another \$500,000. Even if the parcel tax was increased five times to \$2.5 million, what Moragans voted on in 1992, it would still be \$1.5 million short.

Moraga should not complain about paying what it costs to service them.

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