



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors
Wednesday, July 18, 7 p.m.
Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors
Tuesday, Aug. 8, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107, Administration Building, 651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas, visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

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Still no construction activity at stations 43 and 16

By Nick Marnell



Station 43: Nothing to see here.

Two rebuilt Lamorinda fire stations are set to open in 2018, but both properties may be put into service later than originally planned.

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Chief Jeff Carman has bemoaned the languid pace of the Lafayette Fire Station 16 construction at each district board meeting this spring. "Albeit slowly, we are making progress on that station," Carman told his directors June 13.

Deputy Fire Chief Lewis Broshard explained that because a fire station is an essential services facility, the building and design requirements are far more rigid than for a single-family home, and that adhering to those requirements lengthens the construction process.

Lafayette approved the fire sta-

tion architecture in February. The application for a building permit followed, and LCA Architects of Walnut Creek put together the station construction drawings, including structural engineering, drainage and architectural plans, and ConFire submitted three sets of those drawings with its application to Lafayette in June. After favorable reviews by the city, the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District and, yes, the fire district, the county Building Inspection Department will issue the Station 16 building permit, expected by early September.

"It's a new building, on a challenging lot, and it's taking a bit longer to approve," said Chris Joram, Lafayette planning technician.

For now, ConFire continues its prequalification of contrac-



Station 16: Awaiting the call.

"We want builders who have done a fire station in the past five to seven years," said Assistant Fire Chief Aaron McAlister, who has taken over as point-person for the district fire station projects. "They have to have experience dealing with government, and know how to deal with government."

Concord-based Pacific-Mountain Contractors of California, which recently built Fire Station 32 in Alamo and is rebuilding Fire Station 43 for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, is expected to bid on Station 16. McAlister expressed no concern over one contractor working on two fire stations concurrently. "If a contractor can keep the same subcontractors in the same vicinity, that's a good thing," he said.

Once the district receives the building permit the Station 16

project will go out to bid. ConFire should award the contract in October, with the shovels to hit the ground on Nov. 1. "Our realistic opening date is November of 2018," McAlister said.

Meanwhile, work on MOFD Station 43 has hit a snag, possibly delaying a first quarter 2018 re-opening.

"All permits are in place, but the district has not begun construction until it works out a few contract issues," Fire Chief Stephen Healy said. In May, the MOFD board refused to approve a \$100,000 contract increase requested for construction of the fire station, insisting that many of the extra charges incurred were not the responsibility of the district.

"Early 2018 is still possible, but it's becoming more challenging," the chief said.

Photos Nick Marnell

The doctor in the dugout

Gutierrez loves children, and he thrives on the adrenaline rush. "Out of 100 kids that come to the emergency room, maybe one will be seriously ill. That one comes to the ICU. That's where the action is," he said.

Gutierrez leads a department of doctors, nurses, therapists, nutritionists, pharmacists and parents, and they all make the hospital rounds together. Adhering to such a team concept was an easily transferable skill from his days on the diamond, and that background

also helps Gutierrez deal with the failures he experiences; according to the doctor, an infant fatality occurs in fewer than 1 percent of his cases. "We're batting .999, but that doesn't make it any easier," he said.

But miracles do happen. To this day, Gutierrez does not understand how one baby, in septic shock and with a number of organs damaged, came through. "When you save a kid, it's like when you get a big hit, or score the winning run," said Gutierrez, who would know because he has done all three.

Gutierrez plays baseball not only because he loves it but also to deal with stress. "You make an error, you strike out, you lose a ball game — it's not that big of a deal. I never get upset on the baseball field," he said. "When you strike out you're going to have to get back in the batter's box and try again. I love the challenge of hitting a baseball, and on defense I want the ball to come to me."

When it does it is a calming sight to Gutierrez' teammates. "He displays such great hand eye coordination on our infield at shortstop and second base, I can only imagine how great he is in the operating room," said his MSBL manager, Don de Cordova.



Jorge Gutierrez

Photo provided

The smooth hands play equally well on the ball field and in the hospital. "You have to have good hands to insert breathing tubes, long catheters, IVs — they are hard to do on kids," Gutierrez said.

Some of those kids are walking around today thanks to his work at Kaiser. Cards from children he's saved hang all over his office wall. One of his first patients sent Gutierrez her high school graduation picture. A baby with a heart virus — her heart kept stopping — miraculously survived. She, too, sent him a picture: She just had her own baby.

"I would do this all over again," Gutierrez said of both his career in

medicine and his passion for playing baseball.

Bobby Brown is the most famous doctor-ballplayer in Major League history. Brown studied for his medical degree while he played third base for the New York Yankees from 1946 to 1954. He appeared in four World Series, practiced cardiology in Dallas after his retirement from baseball and later became president of the American League.

Had Gutierrez stayed with baseball through college as he pursued his medical degree, who knows how far his own career on the diamond may have taken off.

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County Planning Commission OK's Saranap Village; Board of Supes next

By John T. Miller

Before an overflow crowd of more than 200 residents, the Contra Costa County Planning Commission voted 4-1 to approve Hall Equity Group's plans to build Saranap Village. Commissioner Donna Allen, who echoed some of the concerns expressed by community members at the meeting and wanted a better set of plans to read, cast the lone dissenting vote.

An overwhelming majority of the speakers spoke out in favor of the project, but a handful of community members appealed to the Planning Commission to look into several areas to both improve the project and create guidelines for the future that would alleviate problems with subsequent developments in the area.

Paula Santi, president of the Saranap Homeowner's Association, called on the commission to begin the process for a Specific Plan for Saranap, saying, "This project has been divisive for our community. With so much growth potential for our area, a Specific Plan would make it so we don't have to do this

piece-meal."

Longtime Saranap resident Jim Changaris asked for direction from the county to keep the height down, watch out for traffic safety, and settle on a time of completion so the construction didn't linger. "I don't think anyone in this building is opposed to the project," he said. "It's just that some guidelines need to be put in place."

Former Lafayette Parks and Recreation Manager Jennifer Russell, who also resides in Saranap, expressed the need for more time to review the development agreement and was also concerned that the project's commercial space be filled with viable retailers. "In (HEG's) previous development in Pleasant Hill, much of the downstairs retail space was vacant for long periods of time," she said.

Other concerns included the placement and safety of bike lanes, the angled parking on the street and the project casting an all-day shadow on an existing structure.

HEG declined to rebut any of the concerns, and the Planning

Commission expressed the desire to implement the "Complete Streets" concept from the county's general plan, which involves designing streets for everyone's use.

The Saranap Village project went through numerous revisions over the course of the last five years, and most of the community members praised HEG for their flexibility and openness in listening to the concerns of the residents.

Next stop is the Board of Supervisors. Sean Tully, senior planner with the Contra Costa County Department of Conservation and Development hopes that the matter can be readied for the supervisors' approval for one of the board's August meetings. "This goal may change if an appeal of the county Planning Commission's decision is received," said Tully. "In the event the board approves the project, there would be no additional county decision makers that the project would need to be heard before."

The next meeting of the Board of Supervisors will be on July 18.