

Published September 6th, 2015

Residents losing patience with MOFD Station 43 inaction

By Nick Marnell



Taller weeds are the only difference between this shot and our July 12 photo. Photo Nick Marnell

Amnon Oshri walks his dog on Via Las Cruces in north Orinda every day, alongside the barren construction site of Fire Station 43. "Nothing is being done," Oshri said, lamenting the lack of progress by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District in rebuilding the fire station that was razed in 2016.

"It's just sitting there empty. It's horrible, and it's dangerous," Oshri said.

Honey Hill neighborhood resident Ellen Dale echoed Oshri's frustration. "We are just tired of looking at the vacant lot - which is now full of weeds - and wondering what is going on," she said.

Finding out what has been going on has been frustrating, because the district board has held eight closed session meetings since May, many regarding Station 43 contract litigation, and has reported nothing to the public.

Finally, after the closed session the night of Aug. 29, Fire Chief Stephen Healy explained the reasons for the construction delay. The problems began when Pacific Mountain Contractors, the winning bidder for the Station 43 rebuild, pulled out of the job. The chief gave no reason for the contractor's action, and blamed the construction delays on litigation with Pacific and on putting together terms of a deal with the new contractor, San Ramon-based Federal Solutions Group, one of the original bidders on the Station 43 project. Healy had no comment on the contract negotiations.

"We have been working closely with the fire department on this ahead of the game," said Kabir Singh of Federal Solutions Group. "All of the subcontractors are lined up and we are ready to mobilize once the contract terms are final."

Representatives of Pacific Mountain did not return repeated calls seeking comment. The company recently completed the \$5 million construction of Fire Station 32 for the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District, and according to Aaron McAlister of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, Pacific remains a qualified bidder for the rebuild of Fire Station 16 in Lafayette. ConFire has yet to release a request for proposal for the project.

The MOFD board plans to present all Station 43 contract items and updates to the public at a special Sept. 6 meeting at the Moraga Library.

North Orinda is not without fire coverage, as the Station 43 companies have been working out of a mobile unit in the St. Stephen's Episcopal Church parking lot.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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