



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors
 Wednesday, April 4, 7 p.m.
 Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors
 Tuesday, April 10, 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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MOFD board awards Fire Station 43 contract. Again.

By Nick Marnell

With little fanfare, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board awarded the Fire Station 43 construction contract March 21 to the San Leandro-based Sausal Corporation, the low bidder at \$3.8 million among four proposals submitted to complete the project. Little fanfare is exactly what the district ordered, after two disastrous experiences with contractors in 2017. Pacific Mountain Contractors stopped working on the station in the summer, citing an overwhelming number of

change orders necessary to complete the project. The successor, Federal Solutions Group, failed to meet financial performance obligations. MOFD legal counsel recommended that all preapproved bidders furnish completed financial documents ahead of the contract award, including a performance bond, a labor-material payment bond and an insurance policy. "We did not want to bring anything to the board until all of the boxes were checked," said Fire

Chief Dave Winnacker, who confirmed that Sausal had never been removed from a project for a contract violation. As to the change orders, the chief, SKA Architects and new project manager Scott Ritter of Consolidated CM cleaned up the entire set of plans for the station, getting rid of change orders that made no sense, like the addition of a catwalk. Winnacker also said that he and Ritter will hold weekly construction meetings to ride herd over the project details.

The company has 365 days to complete the job and will be fined \$1,000 per day for delays. The clock began April 2. Sausal has completed other projects in Lamorinda, including a seismic retrofit and complete interior remodel of the Moraga Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and replacement of the turf at the Campolindo High School athletic field. The company also renovated Fire Station 7 of the Fremont Fire Department.

MOFD firefighters share their passion for serving their hometowns

By Nick Marnell

There is a good chance that one of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District firefighters who responds to your emergency call either lives in the district, grew up in the district or graduated from one of the three Lamorinda high schools. And to hear the firefighters talk, they could not be more proud of that pedigree. "It's great. I enjoy the service part of the job," said firefighter Mark DeWeese, Lafayette resident and Campolindo High School graduate who coaches junior varsity football at the school. "We're serving people that we know personally, and I like to think it's nice for them that someone they know

is helping them in their time of need." The desire to give back to the community was expressed by many of the firefighters. Julie Murphy, born and raised in Moraga, a Campo graduate and Saint Mary's College graduate as well, recalled how impressed she was when she attended Camino Pablo kindergarten and saw the fire engine and the ambulance pull up to the school, and then watched a presentation by the firefighters. "Now, it feels so good to be doing the same thing those firefighters were doing back then. It's so cool to give back," she said. Engineer David Mazaika recently delivered his own fire presentation at Mulberry Tree preschool in Moraga. "I felt so proud to speak at my own school," said the 1995 Campo graduate. "It's an honor to serve the community. I love running into friends and schoolteachers and classmates."

Running into those old friends and classmates can be a mixed blessing at times, especially when the firefighters respond to a call that features one of their friends having done something stupid. "They'll hope it's not me on the call because they know I'll give them a hard time," said DeWeese, one of 13 MOFD firefighters who graduated from Lamorinda high schools. The close connection to friends and family can also present special obstacles. Engineer Tim Williams grew up in Burton Valley and graduated from Campo in 2001. And though he, too, enjoys running into and serving family, friends and classmates, one aspect of that closeness sometimes stresses him. "I thought it would be easy, but really it's more difficult," Williams said. "I feel the pressure of expectations, and I don't want to let anybody down."



From left, Chris Davies, Brian Oliver and Mark DeWeese: Campolindo-bred, with finishing touches applied by MOFD. Photo provided

Often the local connection for the fire personnel is through family. Murphy's older sister worked for MOFD, and Mazaika's father worked for the Moraga Fire District. Capt. Brian Oliver, a Campo graduate, had his first contact with the fire service through a family emergency. "My grandmother had a stroke, and the Moraga Fire District answered the emergency medical call," Oliver said. As his mother, a registered nurse, was settling the bills, she reached out to the fire district but was surprised that she was not billed for the service. "I

thought that was such a great burden lifted off of her," Oliver said. It made such an impression that he joined the fire service shortly after college. Engineer and 2002 Campo graduate Chris Davies comes from a family of ranchers who settled in Moraga from Denmark in 1881. "I am the first firefighter in the family," said Davies, who jokingly looks back at a school counselor who told him he would never make anything of himself if he did not go to a four-year college. Davies is one of four MOFD firefighters who live in the district. The underlying sentiment of

many who interviewed was expressed by firefighter Steve Rogness, born and raised in Lafayette, and a 1989 Acalanes High School graduate. "I got a lot from others as I was growing up, and now it feels great to give back," Rogness said. Their local agency through which to give back engenders pride in many of the firefighters. "When I came to learn about the reputation of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, it was an easy decision to join here," said Oliver, who had worked for American Medical Response before he came aboard. "MOFD is the premier destination."

A complex financing arrangement for MOFD Fire Station 43

By Nick Marnell

To pay for the construction of Fire Station 43, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District considered various funding mechanisms, including direct placement and a public offering. San Francisco-based investment bank Brandis Tallman provided direction to the district for the fire station financing, and recommended a direct placement. In order to facilitate the financing, the district created the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Public Facilities Financing Corporation, with whom the district entered into

a lease-purchase agreement for fire stations 42 and 44. The PFFC agreed to advance the district the total rental payment of \$4 million, which would pay for the station construction and which the district would pay back over 15 years. The finance company then assigned its lease payments to a lender, J. P. Morgan Chase, in exchange for the total rental payment. The two fire stations, which MOFD owns outright, have a market value well in excess of \$4 million. But the loan between Chase and PFFC was made based upon the insurable value of the property, not the appraised market value. Fire Station 42 carries an insurable

value of \$2.4 million with Fire Station 44 at \$2.1 million. "I was astounded at J.P. Morgan's rates," said Steve Anderson, MOFD president at the time of the loan agreement. And though the collateral pledged to secure the loan seemed high, the effective interest rate of 2.14 percent, fixed for 15 years, proved too hard to pass up. The district could not simply take out a \$4 million mortgage on one of its owned fire stations to pay for Station 43 because the district is not allowed to mortgage its real property, according to Nicole Tallman of Brandis Tallman. She said the financing method used by

MOFD was a standard and customary way for public agencies to encumber real property. In its recent long-range financial plan, MOFD looks to rebuild Fire Station 41 and upgrade the administration offices in 2019. But the Chase loan may not be prepaid until 2020, during which time three district fire stations will be pledged. According to terms of the loan agreement, the district may substitute alternate real property as collateral with the consent of the lender – in this case, the alternate real property could be Station 43, which the district expects to complete by early 2019.

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An early snapshot of the new truck purchased by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. The truck should be put into service later this spring. The truck was assembled in Wisconsin, and yes, that really is Lambeau Field.

Photo courtesy MOFD