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MOFD Moves Forward Begins Station 43 construction project; creates Emergency Preparedness Coordinator position

By Lucy Amaral

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) Board of Directors moved to begin the interviewing process for securing an architect and project manager for the replacement of MOFD Fire Station 43, located on Via Las Cruces in Orinda. The motion was approved at the meeting held April 20. On the same evening, the Board approved the creation of a new position - Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.

The action on Station 43 comes as a response to research conducted by the Board regarding the District's aging facilities. The Board formed an ad hoc committee, made up of Board members Brook Mancinelli and Richard Olsen, charged with evaluating the condition of MOFD facilities and what, if any, potential changes they might make.

Olsen and Mancinelli presented their findings and recommendations to the Board in March. The Board formally approved the replacement of Station 43 at its April 9 meeting.

According to the report, Station 43 is over 60 years old. Facility issues include: housing three to four firefighters of both genders when it was designed to house two male firefighters; not being up to earthquake code; the garage that houses the engine was originally designed for smaller apparatus; and, the structure does not meet current building standards. The report cited the estimated cost would be \$2.9 million. Financing of the structure would come from MOFD's current and future Fire Flow tax, which is separate from its general fund.

MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley was charged to review information from interested project managers and architects who are experienced in fire station construction and bring a final list back to the Board for approval. Bradley said that the time frame for construction would not begin until after June 30, and will not affect this year's budget.

Additional renovation/relocation projects include upgrading Station 41 in Moraga to national standards for firefighter health, safety and gender issues, as well as centralizing or relocating administrative offices. Bradley said MOFD is in negotiations to purchase a building located next to Station 41.

The Board also approved the creation of an Emergency Preparedness Coordinator position. The candidate hired for this position would be responsible for developing relationships with local agencies, business and associations as well as assist in coordinating emergency plans and exercises. He added that this will be a part time position and will report to MOFD's Fire Marshall.

"The creation of this position will allow the Fire District to provide leadership and emergency preparedness management resources to the City of Orinda, Town of Moraga, Canyon and the other unincorporated areas of the District. This is a great opportunity for the District, City and Town to form a partnership that will ultimately serve to improve the overall safety of the citizens of our jurisdictions," said Bradley.

Bradley added that he would like to form a similar partnership with the City of Lafayette. "I believe we could realize some efficiencies by developing standardized programs in each community. I also believe that the person in this position will be able to identify grant opportunities that could help fund plan-development, training, drills and exercises."

Bradley said that Lafayette has expressed interest in the Lamorinda emergency-planning concept, however a formal agreement will have to be negotiated to bring it into the program. And, he added that because Lafayette is served by the Contra Costa Consolidated Fire District it would also have to be involved in program management if Lafayette were to join.

During the meeting, the Board and Chief Bradley also agreed to meet with executive management consultant Larry Bienati to review the Board Governance Model. Bienati, a principal in the firm Consultants To Management, worked with the Board last year in the development of its Strategic Plan. According to Board President John Wyro, there is a range of perception of what the roles of the Board and Chief are in the administration of the District.

"Our Chief has a set of experiences that inform him as to what his role should be. Each board member brings a different perspective and approach to their perception of what their role should be," said Wyro. "We see a need to better clarify and agree on our respective roles to most effectively carry out the mission of the District. Having a document that better defines those roles will not only help this Board and Chief but those who follow."

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