

# Trash Fire Consequences

By Cathy Dausman

It was only a small pile of charred trash – a couple of blackened catalogs lying along a packed earth Orinda roadway near Wilder – but in a hot, windy and dry fire season, it could easily have gotten out of hand. *Lamorinda Weekly* was alerted to the incident by a reader who remembers the Oakland hills fire. Moraga-Orinda Fire District chief Stephen Healy confirmed the site was under investigation.

“We are very concerned about this incident,” said Kathy Leonard, MOFD fire marshal. “We are at a more severe drought than during the Oakland hills fire which distorted 3,500 homes, caused two deaths and resulted in one of the largest loss from fire in the history of the Bay Area,” she said.

A back road like the one being investigated “can lend itself to illegal activities such as this,” Leonard said, adding that this fire was in a particularly dangerous location due to the steep upslope, dry vegetation and apartment buildings atop the ridge.

“Parents need to be aware that fires that are determined to be started by their child are subject to fines and recovery costs as a result of the incident. Additionally, criminal charges for both the parent and the child may result. If parents suspect that their child is involved with juvenile fire setting, they may contact MOFD,” said Leonard, whose direct line is (925) 258-4520. But law is the lead agency if a crime is determined and

charges are pressed, she added.

Robert Priebe, Moraga’s police chief, echoed the sentiment. “All police and fire [personnel] are very, very concerned about fire during this dry season,” he said, adding that his department wants to be notified even if someone spots a person simply carrying fireworks, because all fireworks are illegal in Contra Costa County. “If anybody sees someone setting off fireworks in a dry field they should call 911,” said Priebe.

Read a related article in this issue: *Red Flag Fire Patrol – MOFD will deploy communication volunteers to watch for grass fires on at least one Lamorinda hill July 4 (page D12).*



Photo provided by Stephen Healy

# U-Turn, Then Full Speed Ahead

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Those details were outlined by ConFire assistant chief Lewis Broschard. According to the deal points he presented, ConFire will pay for the construction of the station on land that MOFD purchased last year for \$1.2 million. The construction is expected to be completed by fiscal year 2016-17 at an estimated cost of \$6 million; ConFire would pay \$2.5 million from its capital fund up front and finance \$3.5 million over seven years.

Once the station opens, MOFD will pay 100 percent of the operating costs for five years before ConFire begins to chip in. Broschard presented a detailed payment schedule which showed that both districts will have contributed nearly \$16 million each for the purchase, construction and operational costs by 2026-27. From that point forward, the estimated \$2.2 million annual operating cost of station 46 will be shared equally by MOFD and ConFire.

“By September, we hope to have a final draft of an agreement to present to the supervisors, along with a detailed financing plan,” said Broschard, who noted that meetings with county counsel and with MOFD had already been scheduled.

“What happened today pushed us toward a solution for fire service for western Lafayette,” said Brandt

Andersson, co-chair of the Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force, at its June 17 meeting. “Now that we’ve reached this milestone, where do we go next?”

“We should redirect our focus on getting 46 built,” said co-chair Traci Reilly. The group agreed to next meet in October, allowing time for both districts to work out further details, including design review. “That will be the critical point,” said MOFD fire chief Stephen Healy. “The selection of an architect will be very important.”

One stakeholder offered words of caution. “Local 1230 is in support of the concept,” said Vince Wells, union president. “But we have not yet sat down and agreed on the staffing model.”

The agreement states that fire station 46, though physically in Lafayette – ConFire’s territory – will be staffed by MOFD personnel. “Having MOFD staff a station in Lafayette is something we have to talk about,” said Wells. He explained that ConFire would be relinquishing up to nine positions under the proposed staffing model.

Broschard remained undaunted. “We are going to get everybody in a room and make this thing work,” he said.

# Civic News Fire Districts

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# Civic News Moraga

## Final Closure for School District's Painful Past

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“They were innocent victims, abused at a young age by someone in a position of trust. The betrayal of that trust has caused real and lasting suffering. It is our hope that this settlement will allow these women to continue to heal and will help them and their families move forward.”

Under the terms of the agreement, the district’s insurer will pay each of the two women \$7 million for the suffering they and their families experienced as a result of the abuse. In exchange, the women have agreed to drop their lawsuits and release all claims against the district and its former staff.

The crisis led the district to strengthen its safety policy and requirements to ensure that all employees report suspected abuse of a student. The district also pioneered a child safety prevention program, partnering with the Lafayette and Orinda school districts and the Child Abuse

Prevention Council of Contra Costa County.

“The curriculum we are using is called ‘Speak Up, Be Safe,’” said child safety awareness coordinator Carol Shenon. “It has been rolled out extensively, it is very age appropriate, and parents are an important part of it.”

This year Shenon met with 3,457 children in 148 classrooms across the three school districts – all of the first, third, fifth and sixth graders. “It is about child abuse prevention and bullying,” she added. “In upper grades we also talk about sexual abuse.” Shenon emphasizes that kids are told that if something happens that makes them uncomfortable it is never their fault and that they should reach out to their ‘safe-adult,’ since it is adults’ responsibility to ensure children’s safety. The program, which Shenon says has been very well received, will continue next year.

## Subtle Differences in Designating Historic Landmarks

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The process is similar to what happens in Lafayette, but as Ursu noted, the property owner can oppose the designation.

Some of the Moraga buildings that are more than 50 years old and could become historic landmarks include the Hacienda de las Flores, parts of Saint Mary’s College, the Moraga Ranch, and the Rheem Theatre. Orinda’s historic landmarks include the deLaveaga home and train station,

a mural at the BART station, the Orinda filter plant, and Casa Azul. In Lafayette, six properties have been designated as historic landmarks: Lafayette Plaza, the Way Side Inn, the former Pioneer Store on Plaza Way, Town Hall Theatre, a portion of Lafayette United Methodist Church (known as the Old Lafayette Grammar School), and a stone plaque on Happy Valley Road marking the site of the first settlement in Lafayette.

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