



# Fire Districts

## Public Meetings

### Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors  
Wednesday, Jan. 6, 7 p.m.  
Moraga Library Community Room  
1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga  
For meeting times and agendas,  
visit [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org)

### ConFire

Board of Directors  
Tuesday, Jan. 12, 1:30 p.m.  
Board Chamber room 107,  
Administration Building,  
651 Pine St., Martinez  
For meeting times and agendas,  
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

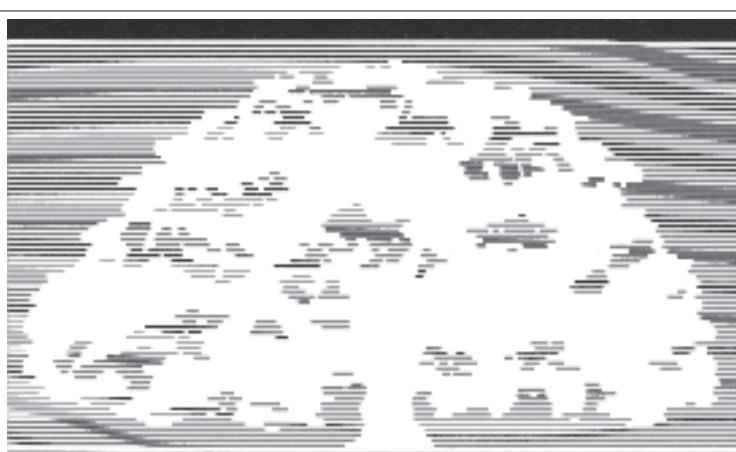
Emergency response information and training:  
Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)  
[www.lamorindacert.org](http://www.lamorindacert.org)

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# A Conversation with MOFD Director Steve Anderson

By Nick Marnell



Steve Anderson at his Orinda home. Photo Andy Scheck

Steve Anderson takes over as president of the board of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District in January. He shared his observations of his three years as a director, and his outlook for the upcoming year, with the Lamorinda Weekly.

**LW: Are you happy that you took this job?**

I am. I've learned a lot, especially about how local government functions. Or doesn't function.

**LW: What's been your biggest surprise?**

How ineffectual local government can be, especially at the county level.

**LW: An example?**

When Contra Costa County closed fire station 16, the fire chief presented a plan to his board and was excoriated by his directors. I was embarrassed for him. Nothing of value was accomplished that day. The board's efforts were counterproductive. If it were me as the chief, I would have walked out of that meeting.

**LW: What accomplishment are you proud of?**

When I got here, MOFD had little ability to do financial forecasts. It was the district's weak suit, and the board recognized this. Over three years, we've done a remarkable job of forecasting our finances.

**LW: So you're satisfied with the district financial condition?**

I didn't say I was satisfied with our financial condition. We're working to get fiscal viability. At least now, we have the ability to measure our finances. People will pick apart portions of our financials. Whether our unfunded pension liability is \$27 million or \$44 million or some other number people say it is, we're addressing it. We're putting out what our accountants and our actuaries tell us. Is it right? Probably not. Is it close? Probably.

**LW: Why do you think the station 46 project fell apart?**

It had a high probability of happening until revenue improved. It would have been a good deal for everyone. Why did it go off the rails? Frankly, I'm not sure.

But it was not because of MOFD. MOFD did not stall. We responded every time the ConFire attorney kept throwing changes back. It was never that we rejected outright any changes ConFire sent to us.

**LW: Could 46 still happen?**

From my perspective, I will try to keep 46 alive as long as possible. I'll be outvoted, but I think it's best for the community, and fiscally it's an excellent deal. And despite what the residents of Honey Hill say, 46 had more advantageous response times than not.

**LW: Even though you have gone on record as calling the county an "unreliable partner," you would re-enter into a joint venture with them?**

Yes, I still consider the county an unreliable partner. But the contract contained provisions to protect us against them, such as specific remedies if either party pulled out of the deal.

**LW: You have a very frustrated union membership.**

Our employees are our best asset, period. But we can't just give them everything they want.

We are in a tenuous economy; 2008 could happen in a flash. One Islamic State attack in San Francisco, and the rate of return on our assets would plummet. We would be back where we were in 2008-09.

Maybe compared to adjacent districts, our firefighters are slightly underpaid. But it's what we can afford. We have an agreement into 2018, and I will continue to adhere to it.

**LW: What do you foresee in 2016?**

In my role as director, to ensure that MOFD provides the service it is established to do. And to be fiscally responsible, by continuing our rigid financial analysis. Also, to maintain our relationship with the union.

**LW: Anything in particular you'd like to change?**

I'd like to push the county retirement board to do even more, such as the changes it made to no longer count certain items toward pension payouts.

**LW: A long-range goal?**

Orinda roads are still a priority. Poor roads affect our response time, and replacing ambulances because they take a beating on the roads affects our bottom line.

Remember, it's not MOFD's job to sit on the taxpayers' money. So, once the district creates fiscal viability and achieves a surplus, shouldn't that money go back to the community? Maybe, to fix the roads?

**LW: The district has taken a lot of grief - from the union, from residents, from the media, even from other public officials. How do you respond to the criticism?**

To the people who want to complain, I would ask them to answer these questions:

When a resident calls, do we respond? Do we respond in a timely manner? And have we saved lives?

If they answer "no" to any one of those, then they should recall me.

# El Nino Preparedness: Let's Bag It!

By Cathy Dausman

In some ways an El Nino winter of warm temperatures and plentiful rain spells a welcome relief to drought-weary Lamorindans. However, much depends on just where that rainfall goes, and where it should not go (see the Dec. 16 article "Water, Water Everywhere: A Cautionary Tale" in the Lamorinda Weekly archives). Perhaps high on every resident's list is the wish that outside water should remain just that: outside.

While an onslaught of water cannot be stopped, it can be diverted to an area where it does the least amount of damage. In this case, sandbags are important tools.

If your home is located in a known flood zone or on a hill, be prepared to deploy sandbags where needed 48 hours ahead of a major storm.

Each Lamorinda municipality will keep a cache of sand and sandbags for its residents' needs this winter, said Duncan Seibert, Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team program manager. In Lafayette, sand will be available at the public works building; in Moraga and Orinda, sand will be available at Moraga-Orinda Fire District stations 41, 43 and 44.

While CERT does not teach sandbagging at its regular classes, Seibert says CERT volunteers would likely staff sandbag stations and offer "just-in-time training" for this skill.

A garage is a particularly vulnerable spot for water to gain entry into a residence, Seibert says. He suggests using 10 mil plastic sheeting held in place with heavy tape before setting out sandbags to divert the water flow. A one-bag-high sandbag wall constructed along a 30-foot-long garage door will take about an hour to make and offers up to four inches in height of water diversion.

Fill the sandbags only half full, fold the top of the bag over and tuck



CERT sandbag volunteers Tim Freeman, John Burgess, John Haffner and Gordon Nathan last December at fire station 41 in Moraga. Photo provided

it underneath the bag, facing into the direction of the water flow. Do not stack your pile over two sandbags high unless there is a building or backing to support it.

The sandbags will deteriorate over time so it is important not to

stage them too early. "Stack them when you get them where you need them," Seibert says.

Although not pretty when deployed, the ounce of prevention sandbags offer a homeowner is surely worth a pound of cure.

## Lamorinda Sand Bag Pickup Locations

(sand and bags available as needed):

### Lafayette

Public Works yard, 3001 Camino Diablo

### Moraga

MOFD station 41, 1280 Moraga Way

### Orinda

MOFD station 43, 20 Via Las Cruces

MOFD station 44, 295 Orchard Road

# Free CERT Training Class in January

By Cathy Dausman

Duncan Seibert believes in the motto "be prepared."

"With the constant threats of earthquake, wildfire and now El Niño, people need to know how to fend for themselves," he said.

Seibert, a longtime Lafayette resident, is program manager for Lamorinda's Community Emergency Response Team, a Federal Emergency Management Agency-backed all-risk, all hazards training course. He is anxious to promote the next CERT session starting Jan. 12 in Lafayette. The three-hour evening classes are free and open to anyone over 17 living or working

in Lamorinda.

"There are 60,000 residents in Lamorinda. There are normally six police patrol cars, seven fire engines and two ambulances on duty," he said, which translates to one first responder vehicle serving every 4,000 residents. "When a large-scale disaster strikes, you and your family could be on your own for quite a while."

Seibert says CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster preparedness. Over the course of seven weeks of lectures and hands-on training, participants learn about local disaster risks, managing hazardous materials and small fires

and receive training in basic first aid and triage. Instructors are local volunteers, firefighters or paramedics trained to FEMA standards.

CERT is a program of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and is organized under the California Volunteers program and the Department of Homeland Security. Lamorinda CERT is directed by a steering committee of volunteer members selected by the Citizen Corps Councils of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda. Students age 16 are welcome if accompanied by an adult. For details, call (925) 255-5143 or visit <http://www.lamorindacert.org>.

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