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Moraga-Orinda Fire District board: architect responsible for Station 43 cost overruns

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board refused to approve a \$100,000 contract increase requested for construction of Fire Station 43, insisting that many of the extra charges were incurred because of mistakes made by the station architect.

Steve Stewart, Station 43 project manager, told the board April 19 that the piers at the base of the fire station on Via Las Cruces in Orinda had to be redesigned due to modifications to the original design and revised geotechnical requirements. "We're adding \$25,000 because the work wasn't done right in the first place?" asked Director Craig Jorgens.

The architect also requested more money to secure project approval from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and to rebuild an interior countertop to have it fully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. "They thought they had all of the permits needed," Stewart said of the architect.

"It is their sole responsibility to get every permit that is required. There is no exception to it," Jorgens said. "They had to go back and check the changes in the code, and obviously they did not."

According to the Nov. 17, 2015 agreement between Shaw Kawasaki Architects of Oakland and MOFD, the architect "shall review the most recent version of the California Building Code and make all necessary changes to the Station 43 design to meet the current code." The Station 43 rebuild had been placed on hiatus in 2013 while the district worked out a joint venture with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District to build and staff a fire station in western Lafayette, but the project fell apart.

"Nothing has changed, except that a bunch of people didn't do their jobs," Jorgens said. "Why are we going to pay them to manage the mistakes that they made?"

The board tabled both the architect's fee request and also a decision on installation of solar panels at the station. Directors Jorgens and John Jex complained about the project's lengthy capital payback and the lack of a district solar tax credit.

Fire Chief Stephen Healy said that he, not Stewart, will talk with Shaw Kawasaki about honoring the terms of its Station 43 contract.

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