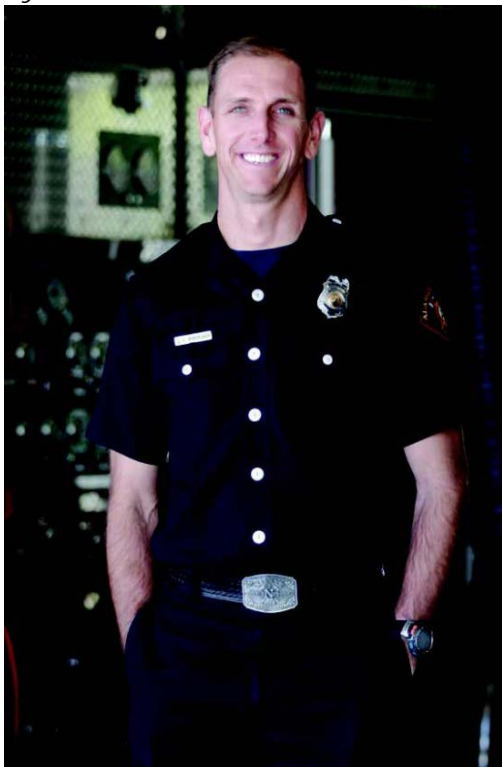


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MOFD chooses 'leader for the new generation' as fire chief

By Nick Marnell



Dave Winnacker Photo provided

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board selected Dave Winnacker as the sixth fire chief in the history of the district. Winnacker, who was chosen unanimously Nov. 20 by the board members, joins the district from the Alameda County Fire Department, where he was Division Chief of Special Operations.

"I am thrilled to come to work in a community that takes pride in their fire district, and I look forward to engaging with the people," Winnacker said. "And I am very happy to be working for an exceptional organization with very talented members."

Winnacker takes over a fire district that has struggled financially for much of the decade, and even with recently improved economics, still faces hard decisions on its financial sustainability. "I have a good idea of what I'm getting into," said Winnacker, who managed budgets in his role with Alameda County Fire. "It is imperative that MOFD remains capable of responding to all emergencies and is able to provide the service levels the community expects, while operating as a lean organization that is fiscally sustainable."

A large majority of MOFD calls are medical, and the new chief comes from a fire department that relied on an outside contractor to handle its ambulance calls. "Everyone can always learn. I will reach out to those who have been doing it - both internally and externally," the new chief said, adding that he appreciates the flexibility of local control of the district ambulance service.

Winnacker leaves a fire department where he reported to a chief and comes to a fire district where he will report to a governing board - a board that has been demanding of its fire chiefs. "I am very excited about the opportunity and look forward to establishing collaborative working relationships with all stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcomes for the citizens of the district," said Winnacker, a 23-year Marine Corps veteran and a reservist since 2001.

The board did not use a recruiting firm to screen candidates, but relied on industry advertising and referrals plus feedback from residents at a public forum. In addition to the board members, a panel including Interim Fire Chief Jerry Lee and two captains interviewed the final candidates. "We believe we have found a real leader for the new generation," board president Kathleen Famulener said.

Winnacker, 42, has worked in the fire service for 13 years, including positions with Fresno City Fire and Newark Fire before joining Alameda County Fire in 2010. Born in Tokyo, Winnacker was raised in Berkeley and graduated from UC Santa Barbara. He lives in Albany and is married with two young daughters.

Winnacker's appointment is subject to a background check and the negotiation of his contract, which Lee expects to be wrapped up by the end of the year.

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