



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Jan. 3, 7 p.m.
Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, Jan. 16, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107,
Administration Building,
651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas,
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorindaweekly.com

MOFD cautiously welcomes in the new year

By Nick Marnell



Superior Court Judge John Kennedy, left, swears in new MOFD Fire Chief Dave Winnacker at the Hacienda de las Flores. Winnacker's wife, Corrie, looks on.
Photo Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board moved on from a difficult 2017 by ushering in a change in district leadership, including the election of board officers, retention of a new law firm and the approval of a contract for the recently hired fire chief.

It was one bit of bad news after another in 2017 for MOFD, which fired its auditor over misap-

plying \$20 million on the district financial reports, was stunned by the unexpected departure of its fire chief and experienced numerous setbacks in the construction of Fire Station 43 in Orinda. Newly elected board president Brad Barber said that potential litigation over the fire station chaos helped convince the district that it needed a law firm with public real estate

experience, and MOFD hired San Francisco-based Renne Sloan Holtzman Sakai LLC as district counsel effective Dec. 20.

Barber named the rebuild of the Orinda station as one of his top goals for the district in 2018. "We want to do everything possible, as quickly as possible, to finish Station 43 on budget and on time," said Barber, stopping short

of promising a completion date. He noted that the Local 1230 labor contract is also a top priority and Barber said the district looks for a smooth, fair process during negotiations. The current contract with the firefighters expires at the end of June.

"From where I sit, Station 43 is the most pressing district need," said Fire Chief Dave Winnacker, sworn in at the Dec. 20 district meeting. "If not properly managed in a hands-on manner – by me – there could be a less than desirable outcome." Neither the chief nor district union representative Lucas Lambert would comment on labor negotiations.

Also for the new year, Barber said that he had not forgotten about the low water pressure delivered by many fire hydrants in north Orinda, but that the problem was more complicated than he originally thought because of the unclear timeline for the East Bay Municipal Utility District to upgrade the hydrants. "Should the public have to wait 20 years? We may need those resources," said Barber, citing the concern of a North Bay-type wildfire in the north Orinda area.

All systems go for ConFire Station 16 construction

By Nick Marnell



If every celestial body aligns perfectly.

Photo Nick Marnell

To demolish Fire Station 16 in Lafayette, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District hired Federal Solutions Group of San Ramon, the same company that the Moraga-Orinda Fire District fired in November as the contractor to build Fire Station 43 in Orinda.

The company could not secure a performance bond for the MOFD project and the district said it could

not take the risk and terminated the FSG contract. "We're aware of the local issues," said ConFire Assistant Chief Aaron McAlister, who oversees the Station 16 rebuild for the district. "We did the due diligence (on FSG). But they're only doing the demolition, which is about a \$150,000 job."

The district pulled the demolition permits in December and

expects the job to be completed by mid-January. "A 100 percent demolition, including the slab," McAlister said.

Before the building is razed, recruits from ConFire Academy 51 will use the structure for training exercises. Recruits will cut holes in the building with chain saws, breach the exterior walls and practice ripping through the roof and

climbing through the windows. MOFD conducted similar training exercises at Fire Station 43 before it was demolished in 2016.

The ConFire board of directors approved the advertising for bids for the construction of Fire Station 16 and McAlister said the solicitations should be sent out in early January. The district has identified five preferential bidders, and by the first week of February, ConFire should know the lead bidders and a realistic cost estimate for the project.

"We're holding to the official estimate of \$3.5 million," McAlister said, but Fire Chief Jeff Carman warned his board Dec. 12 that construction costs are soaring. "The more time that goes by, the higher the costs go up," Carman said.

ConFire has hired Kitchell Northern California as construction manager, and though the sign outside Fire Station 16 suggests a completion date in 2018, the board packet issued Dec. 12 says that "construction is estimated to begin in April 2018 and take 11 months to complete."

State throws down caution flag over tower repair plans

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The base isolator would separate the tower from its foundation, with the foundation absorbing the earthquake force and causing the tower to feel less of the shaking.

In a December letter to the district, Sharon Tapia, DSOD chief, questioned using the base isolator concept as it has not been used on any of the state agency's jurisdictional towers. "Consequently, we

caution that the isolator shown ... may not be an appropriate solution for a tall slender tower, such as the one at the Lafayette Dam," Tapia wrote.

The agency told the district it needs to submit technical reviews of the base isolator, including research, testing and analysis; build a large-scale structural model; and engage an independent board of

consultants to provide oversight.

"We will fully support the district if you move forward on this concept; however it may be prudent for the district to concurrently develop other design concepts," Tapia wrote.

Xavier Irias, EBMUD director of engineering and construction, explained to the Lafayette City Council Dec. 11 that the district needs to

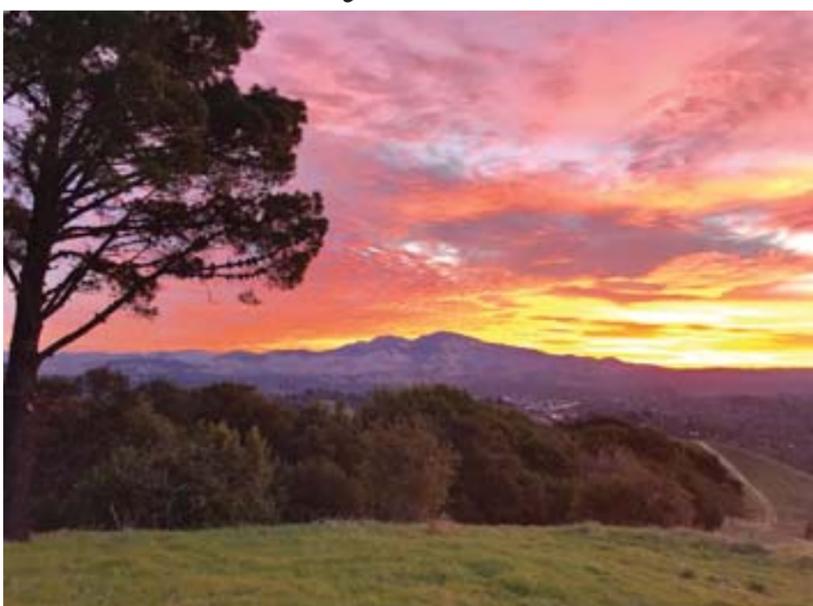
look at how complex fulfilling the requirements for the base isolator would be and how that might delay construction, while at the same time considering other alternatives for the tower retrofit. Irias said that EBMUD has issued a request for proposal for help in modeling, environmental impacts, permitting and outreach for the tower project, and he confirmed that a consultant

is coming on board to help navigate the DSOD requirements.

"DSOD doesn't want an operational fix. They want the tower to be failsafe, and we do too," Irias told the council.

Irias said the district plans to finish the tower retrofit by the end of 2020.

As seen in Lafayette ...



Sunrise over Mt. Diablo last Friday.



Photos Jennifer Spalding