



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors
 Wednesday, April 18, 7 p.m.
 Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors
 Tuesday, May 22, 1:30 p.m.
 Board Chamber room 107, Administration Building, 651 Pine St., Martinez
 For meeting times and agendas, visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

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Believe it! Fire Station 16 is under construction

By Nick Marnell



Lafayette Mayor Don Tatzin, left, seems overjoyed at Station 16 groundbreaking.

Photo courtesy city of Lafayette/Jeff Heyman

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District celebrated the groundbreaking of Lafayette Fire Station 16 with a gold shovel ceremony April 11, and the 22 gold shovels used for the event could

have each signified one of the many obstacles the district had to overcome to finally begin the construction.

"It was hard getting here, but we're here," said Fire Chief Jeff

Carman, who credited the efforts of public officials, his staff, neighborhood groups and the firefighters union for navigating through years of frustration to arrive at the day's banner event. The station closure,

the wrath of the city, the financial problems, the failed joint venture with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, all disappeared in the rearview mirror as Carman announced additional fire protection coming for the western Lafayette area, a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, not unlike the North Bay region that was devastated by wildfires in October.

"Station 16 makes us safer," Lafayette Mayor Don Tatzin said more than once to the dozens of attendees.

Assistant Fire Chief Aaron McAlister, the master of ceremonies and the district point person for the project, warned the Los Arabis Drive neighbors that thanks to the vehicle activity and the construction noise about to commence, things will get worse before they get better, words spoken just before a mid-April storm rolled over the hills into Lafayette. "But you know where we're headed, and we thank you for your support," McAlister said.

ConFire expects to commission the rebuilt Fire Station 16 in early 2019.

3 Orinda elementary schools among 7 distinguished schools in county

Submitted by Carolyn Seaton

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson recently announced the elementary schools honored as California Distinguished Schools for 2018. Orinda Union School District's Del Rey Elementary, Glorietta Elementary, and Wagner Ranch Elementary are three of the seven elementary schools designated as Distinguished Schools in Contra Costa County.

Del Rey, Glorietta, and Wagner Ranch qualified to apply for the

honor based on outstanding student academic performance, high participation rates on state testing, and low student suspension rates. Principals of each nominated school collaborated with a school site team to complete an application in which they described a model practice at the school, how the practice was implemented and monitored, and the results of its implementation on students and staff.

A total of 287 elementary schools have been awarded the

2018 Distinguished Schools designation across the state. The California Distinguished Schools Program alternates every other year between elementary and secondary (middle and high) schools and is returning after a three-year break. In May, the California Department of Education is hosting a California School Recognition Program Awards Ceremony to honor schools that are 2018 California Distinguished Schools and recipients of other prestigious honors.

On behalf of her fellow members on the board of trustees, OUSD Board President Carol Brown stated, "We are so very proud of this recognition of Del Rey, Glorietta, and Wagner Ranch elementary schools. Our teachers and staff, talented students, and committed parents work in partnership to provide extraordinary learning environments across the District. We are thankful to serve as trustees in a community that strongly values and supports public education."

Debate continues over Orinda's private road maintenance

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Many private road residents spoke in the public forum portion of the meeting. Steve Cohn asked the council to reject the staff recommendation and to instead create a task force. Jennifer Wallace said

that many public roads don't even meet the standards for private roads to be accepted as public roads. The staff report, she noted, suggests that neighbors sue each other. She added that the private roads are used for

very public access to things such as school busses, regular busses, and trails. Melissa Roeder said that it is not acceptable that private road residents continue to be taxed for benefits that they don't receive, and mentioned that PG&E is a very uncooperative owner of lands on private roads. Cindy Finch countered the notion that the residents wanted private streets: they don't, she said. Bob de Oro of Orinda Downs told the council, "Just because it is hard, doesn't mean you should just stop," a sentiment echoed later by Council Member Darlene Gee.

Gee spoke at length and passionately about the need for a task force. "I appreciate staff's focus on the fiscal and liability issues," she said, "but I personally have lived here long enough that I don't feel that we became a city just to protect the entity we created. We created the city so that we could have the best community that we could possibly provide for all of our residents." Gee acknowledged how hard the issue is but added, "There is a huge difference between the Wilder homeowner agreements, which are very modern and have all been done very recently, and a road like Mira Loma, which has no rhyme or reason as to how it ended up with half the street being one way and the other half being the other.

"Even our own staff," she added, "testified that you can go back and dig and dig and dig but some of these things just don't add up." She praised the information submitted by Steve Cohn and the resident's group, and spoke at length about how the private streets mirror the public streets, with many cul de sacs, characterizing Orinda as "a windy stretch of a lot of residential streets that go nowhere." Gee said that she would be more than happy to sit on the task force. "I very much agree with the idea of having a task force to explore what the entire range of options are without that being a promise to do anything other than to hear everybody's voice and really think it through," she concluded to applause from the audience.

Vice Mayor Inga Miller also prompted a response from the audience, but it was to correct her use of the term "our money." Miller quickly agreed with the audience members who shouted out that it is taxpayer's money, but she contrasted the often wealthy residents of Orinda with the "very unwealthy" city itself. She stressed the need to maintain funds to deal with difficult issues, such as the Miner Road sinkhole or the upcoming damage to Camino Pablo by EBMUD's latest project.

EBMUD soil removal project

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In the letter, EBMUD claims that a traffic impact study is only required for projects that generate over 50 peak hour vehicle trips and that their project is well below the threshold limit. EBMUD also claims that, based on traffic data from Orinda's 2015-23 Housing Element Update, the additional vehicles generated by its project will temporarily increase morning peak hour traffic on Camino Pablo on average less than 3 percent and will avoid afternoon peak hour traffic.

According to EBMUD, the trucks will run from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

On its website, EBMUD says that it is communicating with local cycling groups as well as Wagner Ranch Elementary School regarding the temporary increases in truck traffic. A portion of Oursan Trail within Briones Reservoir will be rerouted during this time. Maps of the truck hauling route and the Briones trail reroute can also be found online at www.ebmud.com.

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