

# **RESCUE 1**

**FOUNDATION**

1999

SCRAPBOOK

The **1999 Rescue One Foundation Scrapbook** documents a pivotal year in the evolution of fire safety and emergency medical services (EMS) in Moraga and Orinda, capturing community milestones, major strategic changes in the fire district, and celebrations of local identity.

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## Key Themes and Highlights

### 1. Rescue One Foundation Contributions

- Continued its role in funding critical equipment not covered by the fire district's budget.
- Supported acquisition of **portable light pack defibrillators** and a **remote-controlled robot fire dog and engine** used for fire safety education.
- Played a role in helping **equip Orinda police with defibrillators**, enhancing early cardiac arrest response.

### 2. Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Expansion and Upgrades

- The **1997 merger of the Moraga and Orinda Fire Districts** was being operationally and financially unified by 1999.
- MOFD extended **Advanced Life Support (ALS)** to Orinda, added paramedic firefighter coverage to engines, and started the region's first **Police Defibrillator Program**.
- Emphasis on **strategic planning** and **station reconstruction**, notably at Station 42 on Rheem Blvd.

### 3. Fire Safety and Vegetation Management

- Formation of **Fire Safe Orinda Citizens Committee** to address wildfire threats.
- New **weed abatement ordinances** aligned with state guidelines (e.g., Bates Bill).
- Education efforts on safe vegetation, emergency vehicle access, and neighborhood evacuation.

### 4. Fire Code and Community Planning

- MOFD updated its fire code with input from both Moraga and Orinda, addressing:
  - Road access and water supply.
  - Tensions between fire safety and preserving Orinda's semi-rural character.

- Enforcement of vegetation standards while allowing flexibility for landscaping concerns.

## 5. Infrastructure and Budget Unification

- Board approved merging **Moraga and Orinda fire district budgets** (previously managed separately).
  - Despite initial concerns, especially from Moraga residents, a unified budget helped balance deficits and optimize resources.
  - Plans initiated to **replace Station 42** with a new, seismically sound facility.
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## Community Engagement and Moraga's 25th Anniversary

- Rescue One and MOFD played major roles in the **25th Anniversary of Moraga**.
    - MOFD hosted a **pancake breakfast**, open house, and parade participation.
    - Firefighters introduced the **robot mascot "Patches & Pumper"**, inviting kids to name the character.
  - The parade featured local dignitaries, Campolindo students, marching bands, and historic vehicles.
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## Volunteer Recognition and Civic Milestones

- Many who helped facilitate the Moraga-Orinda fire district merger were honored as **Volunteers of the Year**.
- Civic leaders and residents reflected on Moraga's journey to incorporation and its fight for local control over planning, safety, and services.

## 1999 Timeline – Moraga-Orinda Fire District & Rescue One Foundation

### March 1999

- **Police Defibrillator Program Launched**  
Orinda Police Department officers trained and equipped with semiautomatic defibrillators, supported by Rescue One. This marked the first police defibrillator program in the East Bay.

### April 1999

- **Fire Safe Orinda Citizens Committee Formed**  
Community members, led by Fire Marshal Tonya Hoover, tackled vegetation management, fire safety education, and neighborhood preparedness in response to wildfire risk.

### May–June 1999

- **Updated Fire Code Adoption Process Begins**  
MOFD works with city councils and residents to balance updated fire safety regulations with Orinda's rural character. Vegetation and road access standards become key focus areas.

### June 1999

- **Unified Fire Code Adopted**  
New fire code ratified with emphasis on sprinkler protection, water supply, and defensible space. Education and flexibility prioritized over strict enforcement.

### July 1999

- **Advanced Life Support (ALS) Extended to Orinda**  
Paramedic engines placed at Station 45 (Orinda) and Station 42 (Moraga), delivering ALS from the first arriving engine or ambulance.

### August 1999

- **Plans Finalized for New Fire Station 42**  
Conceptual design approved for a new, seismically safe fire station on Moraga Road to replace the outdated Rheem Blvd station. Projected cost: ~\$2.3 million.

### October 1999

- **Moraga's 25th Anniversary Celebration**

Community events included a gala banquet, parade, pancake breakfast by MOFD, Rescue One exhibits, and the introduction of "Patches & Pumper" the robotic fire safety mascot.

**Late 1999**

- **Budget Merger Approved**

The Moraga and Orinda zone budgets were unified to simplify administration and improve resource allocation. Separate board elections and fire flow taxes remain.



Rescue One Foundation is the philanthropic organization founded in 1977 to provide supplemental financial support for the paramedics of the Moraga Fire District. Equipment and supplies not included in the District budget were purchased with funds from the Foundation. With the advent of the merger of the Moraga Fire District and the Orinda Fire District in 1997, the Foundation now provides support to the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

The Foundation has received and disbursed approximately \$150,000 over the past twenty years. The money has come from service organizations, memorials, and gifts from individuals who in many instances received emergency medical or rescue services from the paramedics. Moraga residents are, as a whole, very familiar with Rescue One Foundation. We have been visible throughout the years at community events and our major purchases have generated publicity for the Foundation.



25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Advisory Committee

John Kennedy, President  
Rescue One Foundation  
1280 Moraga Way  
Moraga, CA 94556

P.O. Box 6150 Moraga, CA 94570  
July 24, 1999

Dear John,

It's time to celebrate! The Town of Moraga is having its 25th birthday! This memorable event takes place October 22 and October 23, 1999.

On Friday, October 22nd, a kick off reception hosted by the original Town Council and their spouses will be held at St. Mary's College. The reception will be followed with a dinner hosted by the Moraga Historical Society.

At the reception we plan to review Moraga's 25 year history through a pictorial display. We are soliciting your help and would be most appreciative if your organization would assemble a collage of pictures, articles, or artifacts commemorating your organization's contributions to our town during the past 25 years. If your organization wishes to participate, please mount your collage on a white posterboard approximately 24 inches high by 36 inches long. Completed collages should be delivered to Sarah Cory at 406 Fernwood Drive by Tuesday, October 12, 1999.

It is also our wish to display the collages the following day at The Commons as many activities are planned at that location following the parade. Therefore, you may wish to use copies of your original photographs and/or cover your collage with protective coating. If you wish your collage to be returned, please put your name and address on the back.

We want this to be a community event. Our goal is to have Moragans of all ages, individually or in groups, participate in the anniversary celebration and to demonstrate the spirit and pride our community richly deserves. To do this, we need your help and participation.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in Moraga's 25th anniversary celebration in this way.

Sincerely,

Norma and Bill Combs, Sarah Cory, Betty and Merle Gilliland,  
Barbara and Barry Gross, Sue (McNulty) and Dick Rainey

## COMMUNITY SERVICE



LYNDA LEONARD

Orinda Police Det. Craig Cooper with one of the semiautomatic defibrillators that are now standard equipment in patrol cars.

## Police Equipped With Defibrillators

■ Quick response to a cardiac arrest increases the chance of survival

By DET. CRAIG F. COOPER  
Orinda Police

The police patrolling in Orinda are now outfitted with special cardiac resuscitation equipment. The semiautomatic defibrillators will allow Orinda officers to respond to medical calls of possible cardiac arrest and increase the victim's chance of survival.

Cardiac arrest strikes approximately 360,000 Americans every year. Presently only one in 20 survives. Time is a major factor in surviving sudden cardiac arrest.

Normally the heart pumps blood by contracting and relaxing at regular intervals, with each heartbeat dictated by an electrical impulse that washes across the muscle in an invisible wave. In cardiac arrest, the wave stalls and a sort of eddy of electricity forms. As the current bounces around, the heart begins quivering instead of beating.

This phenomenon is called fibrillation, and if it paralyzes the heart's lower chambers, blood stops flowing through the body. Soon the brain and vital organs are permanently damaged by the lack of oxygen. If a normal heartbeat can be restored within the first 10 minutes, the odds of survival reach 57 percent or more. Upon determining that a person is experiencing cardiac arrest, medical personnel or police officers equipped with defibrillators can shock the heart back into its normal rhythm.

If an Orinda police officer happens to be the first on an emergency scene and sees somebody in cardiac arrest, the officer will be able to use the defibrillator immediately, rather than waiting for paramedic response, thereby increasing the victim's chance of survival.

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District has given Orinda police officers six hours of training, which included classroom and practical use of the semiautomatic defibrillators. Officers have completed both a written and a skills test showing proficiency in the use of the defibrillator.

## Citizens Committee Addresses Fire Safety

■ Next meeting on March 10

By PAT DUNN

We have a serious fire safety problem in Orinda, and you can become part of the solution by joining the Fire Safe Orinda Citizens Committee. Tonya Hoover, Fire Marshal for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, says, "I want fire safety to have the same priority in Orinda that schools and crime prevention have." The committee, facilitated by Hoover, meets for an hour and a half on the second Wednesday of the month.

The Citizens Fire Safe Committee is not to be confused with the three-part government-level committee consisting of representatives of the City of Orinda, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and EBMUD. The three entities are working together to solve Orinda's complex fire safety problems.

The Citizens Committee is not only concerned with Orinda's inadequate fire-fighting water supply but is also working to raise community awareness of fire problems, safe vegetation, good road access for emergency vehicles, and neighborhood evacuation routes.

Some progress has already been made. To improve road access, the fire district is preparing warning notices for vehicles parked in a way that would block an emergency vehicle, such as a paramedic fire engine. A weed abatement and vegetation management ordinance is being

developed and will be in effect by April 1, 1999. It will meet the requirements set forth in the Bates Bill, such as removing dead trees, trimming trees up to 10 feet and removing tall and/or flammable vegetation growing under trees. A fine EBMUD booklet describing fire-resistant plants can be picked up at the fire station on Orinda Way along with other materials of related interest, all at no cost.

For the Citizens Committee to succeed, all of Orinda needs to be represented. Now participating are residents of Sleepy Hollow, El Toyonal, Ivy Drive, Camino Don Miguel, Los Dedos, Charles Hill, Lost Valley, Orindawoods, and Sandhill, plus members of the League of Women Voters and the Orinda Community Church. But more representatives are needed. It would be great if the garden clubs and service organizations and the rest of the neighborhoods would participate.

The Fire Marshal is willing to speak to community and neighborhood groups, and she can direct a caller to other speakers representing the East Bay Conservation Corps, PG&E, the California Department of Forestry, the Diablo Fire Safe Council and the Marin Fire Safe Organization.

You need to be part of the solution. Come to the next meeting on March 10 at 7 p.m. in the Community Center. To receive an agenda or to make suggestions, contact Fire Marshal Hoover at 258-4520.

## Volunteers of the Year



SALLY HOGARTY

The many volunteers from Moraga and Orinda, whose work resulted in the merger of the two fire districts, were honored at The Orinda Association's annual Volunteers of the Year awards dinner. Seated (L-R) are Jerry Meyer, Robert Nielsen, Pam Hall, Judy Shallat, Carol Gustafson, and Gayle Uilkema. Standing (L-R) are Gordon Nathan, Dick and Marsha Allee, Merle Gilliland, Tom Hughes, Amelia Wilson, Carl Weber, Dr. Lee Neison, Pete Wilson, Allan Tabor and John Wyro.

Orinda News March-April 1999

# Fire District's Strategic Planning

By Chief  
Jim Johnston

Looking back over the last year and a half since the formation of the new Moraga-Orinda Fire District, we have accomplished many things. The paramedic service provided to Moraga prior to the merger has now been extended to Orinda. There is now a paramedic transport ambulance located at Orinda Station 45 in addition to the one already located in Moraga. We are in the process of adding to this service level by placing trained firefighter/paramedics on all fire engines throughout the entire District. Known as paramedic engine companies, Engine 42 located on Rheem Boulevard has paramedic service 100% of the time and in August or September of this year Engine 41 on Moraga Way will also be staffed with a paramedic. The result of this endeavor will be our ability to provide Advanced Life Support from any first arriving fire engine or ambulance.

To enhance the opportunity to save human lives, the District has sponsored a Police Defibrillator Program, the first in the entire East Bay. With the cooperation of the police chief, town manager, council members and police officers; and the generosity of the "Rescue One" Foundation, police officers now have the ability to deliver

electric shock treatment to victims of cardiac arrest. With the officer's quick mobility, coupled with the knowledge that minutes count in saving a human life, this added service should truly prove worthwhile.

All fire stations within the district are in need of work ranging from renovation and upgrade to entire reconstruction. Station 45 in Orinda was recently seismically retrofitted. Station 42, located on Rheem Boulevard in Moraga, will need to be reconstructed. The process has recently commenced to determine whether to build on the current site or on one in close proximity that might better meet operational, engineering and government regulatory requirements.

Other items worth mentioning include: MOFD's first baby delivery and first cardiac arrest save, successful implementation and use of newer, more sophisticated life saving equipment by paramedics, improved cooperation with other fire agencies for wildland/interface fire fighting, continued public education through CPR/First Aid classes and open houses, and the hiring of our new Fire Marshal, Tonya Hoover.

As you can see, we have been quite busy. The next five years should prove to be just as busy as the Moraga-Orinda Fire District strives to move forward to provide the highest level of service that is both expected and deserving of the communities we serve.

Over the last seven months the District has been involved in the development of a five-year strategic plan. This process was very comprehensive to ensure that an opportu-

nity for input was received from all interested parties.

We began by conducting interviews with many different groups and individuals. The purpose of these interviews was to gather input regarding issues, concerns and thoughts about where the District is currently and the direction that it needs to go for the future.

Extensive interviews were conducted with each and every fire crew, on all three platoons through out the District. Every Board member, management staff member, clerical staff and reserve members were also interviewed. A public forum was held where members of the community were invited to share their thoughts, ideas and perspectives.

After the interview and public meeting, everyone was allowed the opportunity to submit further input either in writing or by contacting the District directly. Members of the public were also encouraged to contact their Board members and line personnel likewise their labor representatives for input.

The purpose of this process was to prepare a full District assessment report. The strategic planning team members in developing the strategic plan then utilized this report. The starting point of the Strategic Plan is the "Mission Statement". The Moraga-Orinda Fire District's mission statement reads:

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Moraga-Orinda Fire District...

*(Continued from page 2)*

**WITH PRIDE AND  
PROFESSIONALISM,  
THE MORAGA-  
ORINDA FIRE DIS-  
TRICT WILL PROVIDE  
THE HIGHEST LEVEL  
OF EMERGENCY AND  
PUBLIC SERVICE IN  
RESPONSE TO THE  
NEEDS OF OUR  
COMMUNITY**

This mission is supported by five major goals.

**1. Unification** – We will complete the unification of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District into one cohesive organization. **2. Public Service** – We will provide the highest possible level of emergency and public service within the financial constraints imposed upon the district. **3. Organization Effectiveness** – We will build and support profession-

alism throughout the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. **4. Apparatus, Equipment & Facilities** – We will provide the best possible apparatus, equipment & facilities within the financial constraints imposed upon the district. **5. Finances & Revenue** – The Moraga-Orinda Fire District will meet its operational and capital needs in a manner that ensures the district's financial stability.

The remainder of the plan is a multi-page document that further elaborates each one each of these goals through **objectives, strategies and tasks**. Completion dates and the people that are responsible for overseeing the tasks are provided for accountability.

It is important to note that many of the activities that the District is currently doing are in confor-

mance with the stated goals and objectives of the plan. It's not as if we have to stop what we are doing and start over. What the plan does is give us a road map so that we all know the destination point of where we are headed.

Up to this time a great deal of work has gone into the development of the Strategic Plan. We would like to acknowledge the participation of everyone who has an interest in the development of the District. This is not the end product, however. In a sense, this is really just the beginning. The "real" work will be in implementing the plan over the next five years. This will take a concerted effort by all staff, board members and the community in order to make the plan a true success.

## ORINDA ASSOCIATION AWARDS CEREMONY

# OA Awards Dinner: A Grand Evening!



Moraga-Orinda Fire District board president Gordon Nathan (L), who represented Moraga on the joint Moraga-Orinda committee, and Orindan Carl Weber told the audience of the work in both communities that led to the merger of the two fire districts. Weber chaired the Orinda Fire Protection and Emergency Services Advisory Committee and the joint Moraga-Orinda committee; he also co-chaired the campaign committee.



Then-OA President Mark Roberts presented Cinda MacKinnon, founder of the Friends of Orinda Creeks, with the William Penn Mott Jr. Environmental Award. The OA recognized her work as a tireless advocate for Orinda's creeks.



Honoree Pete Wilson, who is vice president of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board, was co-chair of the Orinda Fire Protection and Emergency Services Advisory Committee and was a board member of the Orinda Fire Protection District. He contributed countless hours in the drive to merge the two districts.



Amelia Wilson (L) co-chaired the campaign committee with Carl Weber and Judy Shallat (R). Wilson led the audience through a rousing series of questions resulting in everyone present having a hand held high. She then observed that *everyone in the room* contributed to the merger!

Photos by Sally Hogarty.



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# As fire district updates its code, officials work on balancing act

By Emilie Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

Typically, it's one of those mundane exercises of bureaucracy in which the details are best left up to the professionals.

However, this year's adoption of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's fire code became a communitywide issue of balancing fire-prevention concerns with the preservation of semi-rural character.

"We need to take into consideration special needs the community might have," said Moraga-Orinda fire board president Gordon Nathan. "Our first concern is community safety with regard to fire safety and fire prevention."

The district's fire code is based on a uniform code that provides minimum fire-safe standards throughout California. Updated every three years, this state code can be augmented by local jurisdictions to provide standards that are even more restrictive.

According to Fire Marshal Tonya Hoover, if these changes include new building standards, the code must also be ratified by affected municipal jurisdictions.

The Moraga-Orinda district included additions and amendments that detail road access, water supply, hazardous material storage, weed abatement and sprinkler protection requirements. With this year's amended language for sprinklers, what is typically only a fire district issue became a matter to be reviewed by three municipal jurisdictions.

"It's a matter of getting to know each other," Hoover said. "There is flexibility and there is the ability to meet the intent of the code."

With a portion of the district's Orinda zone designated as a very high fire hazard severity zone, fire prevention efforts are especially important in Orinda. The code addresses some of the city's fire-safety concerns by outlining regulations for road access, water supply and weed abatement — areas generally not an issue in Moraga.

Input from the Moraga Town Council primarily concerned the incorporation of a districtwide Class B roof requirement. While the council hoped that this could be included in the code, Hoover pointed out that it is actually a building code issue. She offered to help the town put together a comprehensive requirement. Orinda already has one in place.

The Orinda City Council raised several concerns about the overall nature of the fire code, in terms of how the regulations are applied. Above all, the council wanted to ensure that the code was compatible with the city's General Plan.

"These were more comments that needed a clarification rather than a specific change to the ordinance," said Bill Lindsay, Orinda's city manager.

Hoover emphasized that the fire code was not retroactive to existing conditions. She also pointed out that the fire district was more interested in using the fire code as a public education tool than enforcing the letter of the law.

"Regulation is meant to be changed, it's meant to be worked with," Hoover said. "We don't want to get too exact in regulation because then we're locked into it. It allows you the ability to move within the book."

However, vegetation is an area in which enforcement could become necessary. The district's existing weed abatement ordinance, which was effectively folded into the fire code, already demands compliance. Vegetation in general is not considered an existing condition as outlined in the fire code.

"Vegetation is a fire hazard, but vegetation is also an amenity which makes this community livable," Orinda Councilman Gregg Wheatland said at an April council meeting. "We need to find a careful balance of consideration."

Hoover maintained that even with vegetation, there is flexibility to compromise. She insisted that the fire code is meant to be a fluid document, with which the entire community feels comfortable.

"They have a balancing act to do," Hoover said of the municipal entities. "It's such a big animal that we're trying to get our arms around. Let's break it down, and that's what I'm trying to do."

The Orinda and Moraga city councils will consider ratification of the fire code sometime this month. The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors will then be asked for input as the governing body for the fire district's unincorporated areas.

The code is due to be adopted by June 30.

# Moraga-Orinda board considers using recycled water to fight fires

By Emille Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

ORINDA — With a projected \$36 million to \$50 million price tag staring them in the face, the Fire Safety Committee brainstormed other solutions besides pipe replacement to help alleviate the city's dire fire-flow needs.

During the last meeting, reclaimed water was introduced as an alternative firefighting source. The possibility will see further research by the committee — made up of representatives from the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, the city of Orinda and the East Bay Municipal Utility District. The group was formed more than a year ago to address the lack of water pressure in Orinda, a city with all the ingredients for a full-scale fire disaster.

"In the (1991) Oakland Hills fire, one of the problems was running out of water," said Moraga-Orinda fire district board member Pete Wilson. "Here is a large source of water relatively untapped that is a very viable source in an emergency."

Meanwhile, the committee adopted the final draft of the Orinda Fire Flow Comprehensive Engineering study in a 4-1 vote, with Wilson opposing. The study identifies a need for 192,000 feet of new pipes for a fire-flow of 2,250 gallons per minute from three adjacent hydrants.

With limited funds available for the proposed improvements,

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*'Here is a large source of water relatively untapped that is a very viable source in an emergency.'*

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— Pete Wilson, fire board member

the committee is focusing on other ways to alleviate Orinda's risk.

Richard Harris, supervising engineer for EBMUD's Water Reclamation Planning, presented the logistics of using reclaimed water from the planned Lamorinda Recycled Water Project.

Due to be in Orinda by 2003, the water could be diverted from its main input system — the former Shell pipeline. The water is currently being treated at a Central Sanitation District tertiary treatment plant in Martinez and will be used in Lamorinda as an irrigation source for large users.

While the committee agreed that the idea was intriguing, they also learned that recycled water presents many constraints as a firefighting tool.

"If we can use it there, we should explore it," said EBMUD board member Katy Foulkes. "But no one is saying that we should build a whole other pipeline."

According to Harris, the flow of the reclaimed water will reach only 1,500 to 2,000 gallons per minute. This is only enough pres-

sure to supply one hydrant at a time.

With only limited areas slated for recycled water irrigation, firefighting aid would also be limited unless significant alterations were suggested for the project, currently on the brink of its pre-design phase.

"I think there is potential there, but I don't know how much help we'll be able to get because of the location issue," said Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Jim Johnston.

Orinda resident Clyde Vaughn also brought up certain perceived health risks of recycled water.

Fire Marshal Tonya Hoover reminded the committee that more water is not the only answer for Orinda's fire problem.

Preliminary results from Hoover's citywide risk assessment study show that flammable vegetation is one contributing hazard that can be mitigated.

"Everybody thinks water is the solution," said Orinda resident David Klement. "I'm wondering if anyone's actually doing something about vegetation instead of just talking about vegetation."

# Moraga-Orinda fire ready to merge budgets

By Emille Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District came one step closer to complete unification last week — with a board decision to merge the budgets for the Moraga and Orinda zones.

"We want to get away from the approach of Moraga and Orinda, them and us. It does not make sense to keep them separate," said board president Gordon Nathan. "We're well on our way to reaching our goal for total unification."

Following through on input from the board's finance committee, the board tentatively approved several suggestions, ranging from approval of the budget merger to the implementation of a district reserve account and a five-cent fire-flow tax rate for both zones.

The finance committee, comprised of directors Pete Wilson and Peter Scurr, came up with its recommendations while putting together a long-range budget forecast — also approved by the board.

Information gleaned from this process convinced the committee that financial unification would make more sense now, rather than waiting the four years suggested in the district's 1997 Local Agency Formation Commission merger application.

"If this is a reasonable and sound forecast, then there is every reason to merge things," Wilson said. "Nobody gains by keeping things separate."

Currently the district maintains three separate budgets — one for each zone and one for those revenues and expenditures that are uniform. Board members expressed

concern that three sets of books creates extra work for district staff.

"We'll be saving a lot of time and energy," Nathan pointed out.

According to Wilson, the long-term budget shows a surplus in both Moraga's capital budget and Orinda's operating budget. With a coinciding deficit in Moraga's operating expenditures and Orinda's capital expenditures, a unified budget would also be a balanced budget.

"The total volume of money is adequate — it is just how it is being allocated and spent," Wilson explained.

In the past, Moraga residents in particular have expressed reservations about the potential merging of funds. With more capital revenue available in Moraga, residents were concerned that Moraga money would be used to pay for Orinda

improvements — specifically the replacement of the city's two satellite fire stations.

However, with a recent increase in staffing at Moraga's main station, a deficit was created in the zone's operating budget. Consequently, a unified budget became something more beneficial to both zones.

However, the two zones will still be maintained in terms of separate board elections and fire flow taxes. These changes are beyond the purview of the board and require a ballot election.

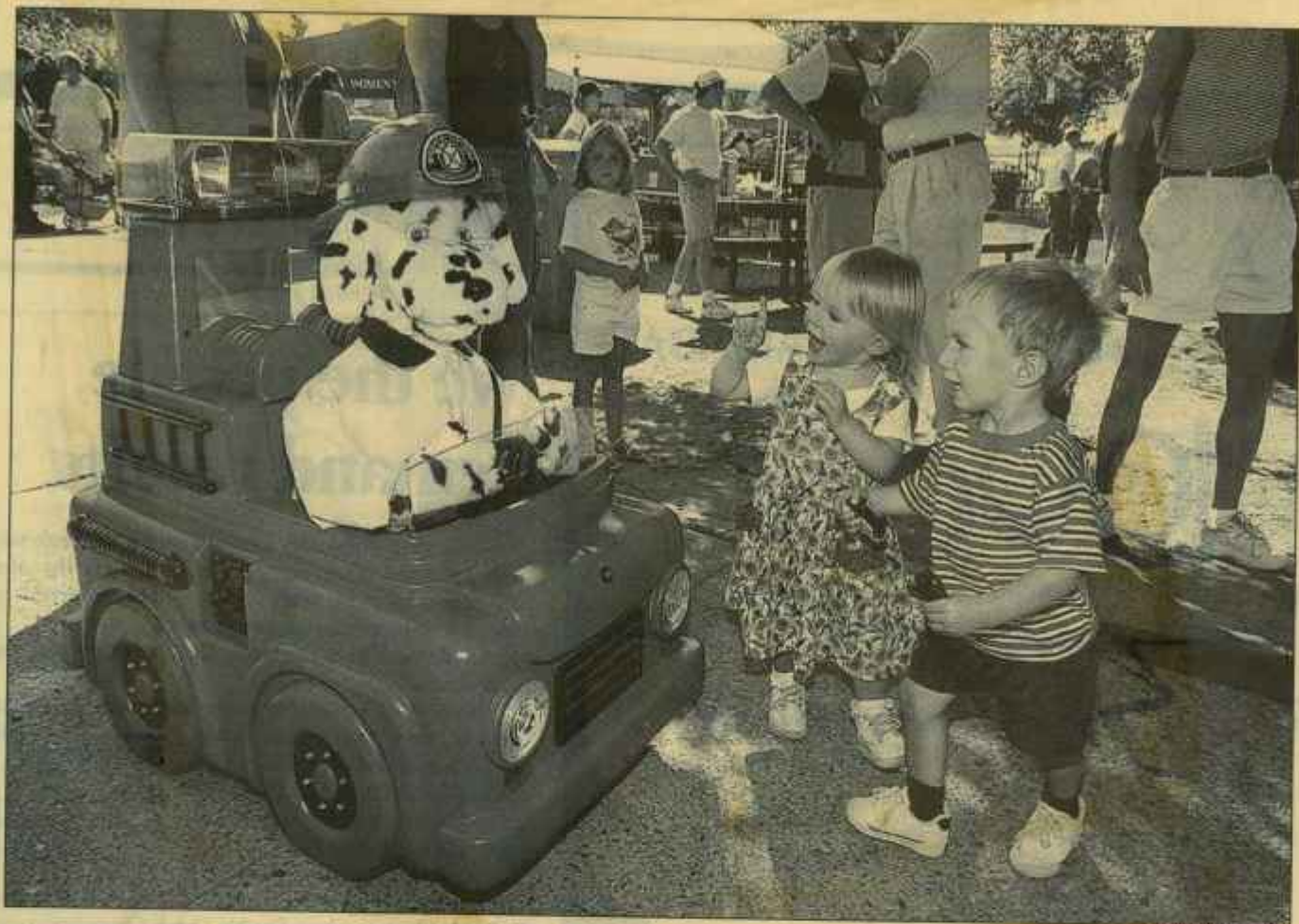
"The zones still are in existence; we are just eliminating the zones as far as bank accounts are concerned," Wilson said.

The board plans to officially adopt the budget proposals at 7 p.m. June 22 at the Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way in Moraga.

Contra Costa Sun 6-2-99

Central Costa Sun  
9-29-99

## Dog-gone cute



EDMUND LEE/SUN

Samantha Marie Starkey and Christopher Collette check out Patches, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District mascot, during the Artists Faire on Saturday at Moraga Commons. The annual event is sponsored by the Moraga Women's Society.

## A two-day party set in Moraga

MORAGA — The town's birthday bash promises to be remembered for the next 25 years.

Events begin on Friday with the Moraga Historical Society banquet. Longtime Saint Mary's president Brother Mel Anderson will join community members for a night of reminiscing, along with performances by the California Academy of Performing Arts and the Saint Mary's NightinGals. The 25th anniversary video, compiled by Campolindo graduate Jeff Cole, also will be unveiled.

Festivities begin at 6 p.m. in the Soda Center at Saint Mary's College, with a reception put on by the wives of the first Town Council.

Saturday's activities start early with a 7:15 a.m. silver run sponsored by the Lafayette Moraga Youth Association. Non-athletes can enjoy a pancake breakfast hosted by Moraga-Orinda firefighters.

A parade begins at 10 a.m., with

several bands, local celebrities, llamas, horses and much more. Participants will march down Moraga Road from Rheem to the Moraga shopping center. Moraga Road will be partially closed between Rheem Boulevard and St. Mary's Road until 1 p.m. Access from side roads will be available.

The rest of the day, community members can enjoy the pear festival, food booths, a mariachi band, a Lamorinda Arts Alliance art exhibit and music by Tommy and the Four Speeds. The town will also have five booths set up to involve residents in the general plan update process. Activities will include information displays as well as plenty of chances to lend a voice.

The celebration will conclude with the Chamber of Commerce's Round-Up, a Western barbecue and dance beginning at 5 p.m. on the Old Moraga Ranch. For tickets, call 376-0150.

Central Costa Sun 10-30-99

*Contra Costa Sun*  
10-6-99



## SUNBEAMS

By Harriet Ainsworth

### Name that Dalmatian

**HAVE YOU SEEN HIM?:** He's a Dalmatian in a firefighter's helmet, riding in a miniature fire engine. He goes to Moraga and Orinda pre-schools and elementary schools, talking with kids and their parents about fire safety. He's very popular with the kids, their families and educators because he really gets the kids' attention. It seems learning what to do to prevent fires and how to escape fire is not so threatening when you hear it from somebody your height.

But he needs a name. So Moraga-Orinda Fire Marshal **Tonya Hoover** is sponsoring a contest in the fire district's schools to find a nice local name for "Patches and Pumper" — the manufacturer's designation for the robot, a remote-controlled teaching device purchased by Moraga's Rescue One Foundation.

The foundation, explains Moraga charter member **Jerry Meyer**, raises funds to buy helpful things that the fire district's budget can't afford. The group has contributed more than \$150,000 since its beginning in 1977 in Moraga, and now that Moraga fire control has merged with Orinda and Canyon, it voluntarily works for all three communities. This year, Rescue One has purchased two portable light pack defibrillators.

Through the foundation, Moraga was for a long time the only Lamorinda community with trained paramedics, which now are shared. Jerry says call her at 376-4931 if you'd like to join the firefighters of Rescue One.

#### SO, KIDS, THINK UP A GOOD NAME

for the Dalmatian and his firetruck. Author of the winning name will get to ride in Moraga's 25th anniversary parade on Saturday, Oct. 23. And, says Fire Marshal Tonya, whose favorite color is red (even her hair), the winner will be presented with a T-shirt imprinted with the ramblin' robot's new name. Send your winning suggestion to her at the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, 33 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563. (If you want to see the mascot, stop by the open house at Station 41 on Saturday; see Datebook calendar for details.)

## FIRE

FROM PAGE 1

in varying financial constraints.

"What we're trying to eliminate here is what happened in the Oakland Hills, a fire starting in zone 1 and getting to zone 8," said Orinda Councilman Allan Tabor. "We take the amount of money the community is willing to spend and go through these projects and decide which one will prevent an Oakland Hills situation."

An example of a possible project scenario was presented last week by David Rehnstrom, an assistant civil engineer with EBMUD. For \$2 million, new pipes could be put in at Charles Hill Road and Manzanita Drive while pipes at Donald Drive and Miner Road could be replaced with pipes of a larger diameter. Taken together, these improvements were assessed to impact areas beyond their immediate locations.

Committee members asked if the reduction of other types of fire hazards could change such scenarios.

"If we recognize that fire flow is one element, is there a way to feed other elements into the equation?" asked fire district board member John Wyro. "Would that change prioritization?"

For example, Wyro said that rather than spending all the money on pipes, some might be better utilized on vegetation management.

Voters could be asked to approve a tax to fund improvements. Once priority projects are chosen, the community could either decide to implement only a portion of proposed improvements or phase projects over a number of years.

Committee members predict a diminishing return that will enable the community to keep the overall price tag well under \$50 million.

"There will be incremental increases throughout the entire community until we eventually do get to 2,250 (GPM)," said fire district chief Jim Johnston. "While we're not going to get to 2,250 right away, we're going to vastly improve the water system in the meantime."

Although residents may not see construction in their immediate neighborhoods, the committee reiterated that the overall benefit to the city is worth the cost.

"A zone could be relatively risk-free, but it's vulnerable to what's around it," said Orinda resident David Klement. "These are statistical risk assessments. These tell you nothing about what's going to happen if the worst starts."

The next Orinda Fire Safety Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for 7 p.m. Dec. 8 at the Orinda Community Center. For more information, call the city offices at 253-4200 or visit the fire district's Website at [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org).

# Tough decisions ahead for Orinda's fire panel

By **Emilie Karrick**  
STAFF WRITER

ORINDA — After almost two years of studying the city's imminent fire danger, the Fire Safety Committee is moving into decision-making mode.

The group is being asked to balance the benefit of improvements with a possible monumental price tag. Fortunately, these decisions will, for the most part, be made by an objective analysis of data.

"You do it where it's best for the community. You don't let people vote their interests in something like this," said Orinda resident Herb Brown. "If you let people ask the question, 'What does this do for me?' you've gone into a black hole."

The committee — made up of representatives from the East Bay Municipal Utility District, Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the city of Orinda — first came together in early 1998 to assess what could be done to alleviate a serious lack of water needed to fight fires in what

has been deemed a very high fire hazard severity zone.

This January, EBMUD staff presented the results of a fire flow comprehensive engineering study — projecting \$50 million in improvements needed to obtain the firefighting capacity of 2,250 gallons per minute (GPM) from three adjacent hydrants. The plan includes 192,000 feet of pipeline replacements.

Last week, fire marshal Tonya Hoover presented the results of a citywide fire prevention risk assessment study. Dividing the city into eight zones, the study looked at other factors that contribute to fire risk — from vegetation and road access to building density and roofing materials.

Over the next four months, fire district and EBMUD staff will be working together to combine the results of these two studies. A computer model will digest all collected data and spit out a range of project options that best eliminate fire hazards for the overall community with-

See FIRE, Page 2

Contra Costa Sun 10-13-89

C.E. Smith

# Moragans reflect on 25 years of success

By Emille Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — There would be no cows grazing on rolling hills; instead cookie-cutter-like houses would dominate those rustic vistas. Trips to the grocery store wouldn't result in half-hour conversations with that friend from across town; rather errands would be shared with thousands of unknown faces. Meanwhile, traffic would inch its way across the area's three freeways.

Twenty-five years ago, Moraga was slated to become just another suburban off-ramp. However, through the tenacity of some residents, the town has instead become the modern-day pinnacle of small town lore.

"It's an experience that I wish everybody in America could go through. It renews your faith in the viability of the democratic process," said 40-year resident Lee Nelson. "It's the epitome of 'We the people ...'"

Nelson was a leader in the movement to incorporate. After moving to the area in 1957, he joined the Moraga Community Association — a group formed in 1950 to advocate for the community's interests.

"There were a whole lot of people who dealt with the county and were frustrated with their inability to recognize what we wanted and what we needed," Nelson said.

Residents got their first taste of the frustration indicative of county control when Utah Mining and Construction Co. released plans to increase the community to 54,000 people.

In 1954, John Thune bought one of the town's original 35 homes for a hard-earned \$17,125. After hearing about the Utah Co.'s plans, Thune offered to lend a hand in the planning process.

"They said, 'We're going to screen you out of here,'" Thune said. "Basically, they didn't appreciate us being there."

He recalls how public meeting notices used to be posted in the middle of cow pastures, while residents were told that the planning process was between the county Planning Commission and the development company. Proposed guidelines for the Moraga development were far from what was outlined in the county's planning requirements.

"Everything was substandard," Thune said. "The Planning Commission was in the pockets of the developers."

Moraga was also to include the Shepherd Canyon freeway, the Gateway connector to Highway 24 and the Bollinger Canyon throughway to Highway 680.

"The character of the community would have been changed drastically," Nelson said, recalling an early 1960s field trip with the county Planning Commission to the site of newly built Ascot Drive apartments.

"One commissioner looked up at the apartment buildings and said, 'This looks like a quaint Bavarian village.' We knew then that we had to change things."

In 1963, the community officially broached the idea of incorporation, and the MCA formed an incorporation study group. While the group recommended incorporation



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/SUN

Gordon Soares talks about the drive for local control. The articles of incorporation were signed on his table.

for reasons that ranged from local control to better police services, there was little impetus to launch a movement.

"There just wasn't enough of a seed generated," said Tom Lowe, a member of the study group. "People really hadn't focused on the (local control issue) yet."

It wasn't until the early 1970s that the movement to incorporate truly got under way. Citizens to Incorporate Moraga was formed after a 1972 MCA meeting in which resident Ellen Dale raised her hand to ask the historical question.

See MORAGA, Page 2



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/SUN

Sgt. Bob Priebe was an original member of the Moraga Police Department.

## Moraga values unique identity

By Emille Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — While in many ways the town has grown up, the elements that residents sought to protect through incorporation remain.

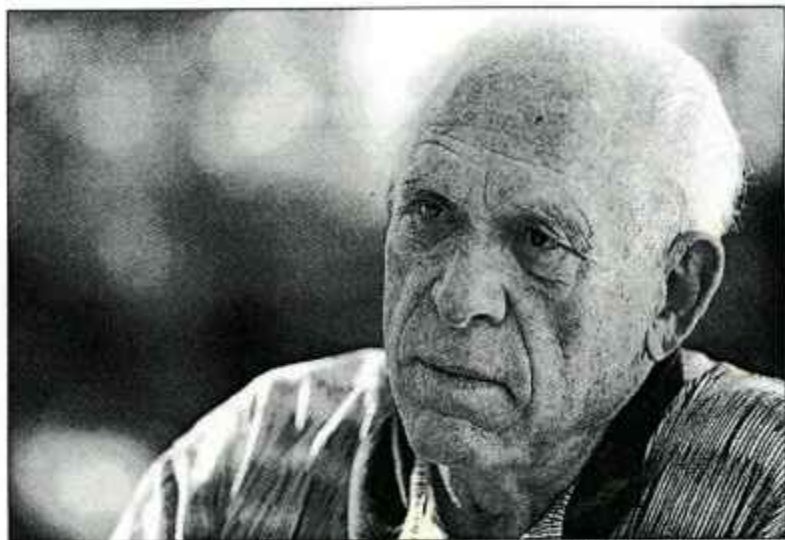
Locally controlled parks, police, fire and schools all contribute to what many deem a unique Moraga identity.

Incorporation leader Bob Merritt remem-

bers when this identity was first coming together. While the incorporation process officially brought about a town of Moraga, several smaller movements in the years preceding set out priorities that are still in place.

In 1969, a small group of people fought long and hard but were unable to overturn a ballot initiative that made the Moraga fire district a part of the county's consolidated fire services.

See UNIQUE, Page 2



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/SUN

A resident since 1957, Lee Nelson has been a longtime civic leader — including a stint on the Planning Commission.

## MORAGA

FROM PAGE 1

"With all these problems we're having with the county, would we have these problems if we were incorporated?" Dale recalled.

Dale, Nelson, Bob Merritt, Gordon Soares and Mike Cory were among the leaders of the effort to put together a report that included financial, geographical and planning projections.

This group then turned into a campaign machine — hosting 75 coffees, churning out numerous fliers, appearing before the Local Agencies Formation Commission, the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission.

"We wanted it to be grass-roots," Dale said. "It was an incredible collection of people. Every type of knowledge you needed was in that room."

Thirteen candidates signed up for the first Town Council election. Debates were held all over town, with residents presenting a wide variety of opinions.

"I was really not for or against incorporation," said Mel Hermes-meyer, who worked with a group

called Keep Moraga Unincorporated. "I was more interested in residents learning more about the pros and cons."

The biggest issue at hand was a 16 cent tax per \$100 assessed valuation.

According to Merritt, financial projections indicated a need for a property tax increase for new expenditures such as police and public works. Many were concerned there wouldn't be enough money to cover emergencies, such as slide repairs.

In the end, 3,679 Moraga residents voted to support incorporation and the tax increase; 2,537 opposed.

"It went pretty smoothly. I can't remember us having significant setbacks," Soares said. "When I look back on it I can't remember us saying, 'This isn't going to happen.'"

On Nov. 13, 1974, Cory, the town's first mayor, pounded the gavel to begin the first Town Council meeting — in front of a crowd of 300 people. By 1979, the town had its first general plan in place.

Twenty-five years later, those involved in the process are happy to say that not much has changed.

"The quality of life that we enjoy now was really the goal of incorporation," Soares said. "We've provided a model for not only the process but how it turned out."

# UNIQUE

FROM PAGE 1

However, in 1970, a movement to exercise local control over recreation brought about an independent parks authority.

Meanwhile, residents turned up with paint brushes and paint cans to transform the old telephone company into a newly remodeled library.

"People started getting this sense of community," Merritt said.

Moraga has always been especially proud of their paramedic service.

In 1978, Moraga led the county by providing its own paramedic transport. This year, the newly formed Moraga-Orinda Fire District became one of the first in the Bay Area to provide paramedic service on each engine company.

Rob Goodyear, now a battalion chief with the district, was one of the original paramedics in Moraga. He credits the paramedics' continued success to community organizations such as the Rescue One Foundation, which over the years has given Moraga's paramedics more than \$100,000 worth of equipment.

"The community is willing to give a lot of themselves to help us give them a better level of service," Goodyear said. "We'll go out to cats in trees. We just have to go that extra mile. We value that as a core value of the fire district."



KRISTOPHER

Firefighter-paramedic Arnie Peterson, left, firefighter-engineer Bill Bethea and paramedic-captain Kristopher Cox are with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District — one of the ways Moraga maintains its indepe

In 1979, the town broke away from the county Sheriff's Department to launch its own police department. Sgt. Bob Priebe was on the force from the beginning. He remembers a respect for the department that remains today.

In the early days, people would flag him down while on patrol to come inside and have a cup of cof-

fee. As a baseball coach in Moraga for several years, he built relationships that are still strong.

"This place is like a child to me," he said. "I wouldn't be here 20 years after I started if I didn't love what this place is and didn't have pride in what we've built it up to be."

However, as the town entertains

new ideas, such as a town center, some raise concerns about the influence of a bureaucratic

"We've reached an authority that's sad in a way," said Gordon Soares. "It's like a town center began as an institution. Sure we're proud of it, we're a town. But it's different."

# OPEN HOUSE

AT STATION 41 1280 Moraga Way  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9<sup>TH</sup>, 1999 10am – 2pm

## Events:

- 10:am - Jaws of Life Demo
- 11:am - Reach Helicopter/  
Jaws of Life Demo
- 12:00 - Ladder Truck Demo
- 12:30 - Police K-9 Demo
- 1:pm - Fire Engine Demo
- 1:30 - Police K-9 Demo



Free stuff for  
the kids



Visit with Smokey Bear

## On-goings Attractions:

- Learn Exit Drills in the Home
- Squirt a real fire hose
- Our new engine & dog robot
- American Red Cross
- Free balloons & stickers
- Rescue One Foundation
- Smokey Bear
- Home sprinkler Demos
- Reach Helicopter
- Sparky the Dog
- BP checks
- Meet the Fire Dist. Board
- Kid Print with Blockbuster



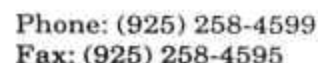
Squirt a real fire hose



Practice Stop, Drop,  
Roll with the firefighter

**Note:** Our annual pancake breakfast will be held at the Moraga Commons on October 23<sup>rd</sup> as part of the Town Celebration.





| Address | Phone |
|---------|-------|
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# NOTICE ROAD CLOSURE PARADE ROUTE SATURDAY OCT. 23, 1999 10 AM TO 1PM

MORAGA RD. WILL BE CLOSED BETWEEN CORLISS AND RHEEM BLVD.

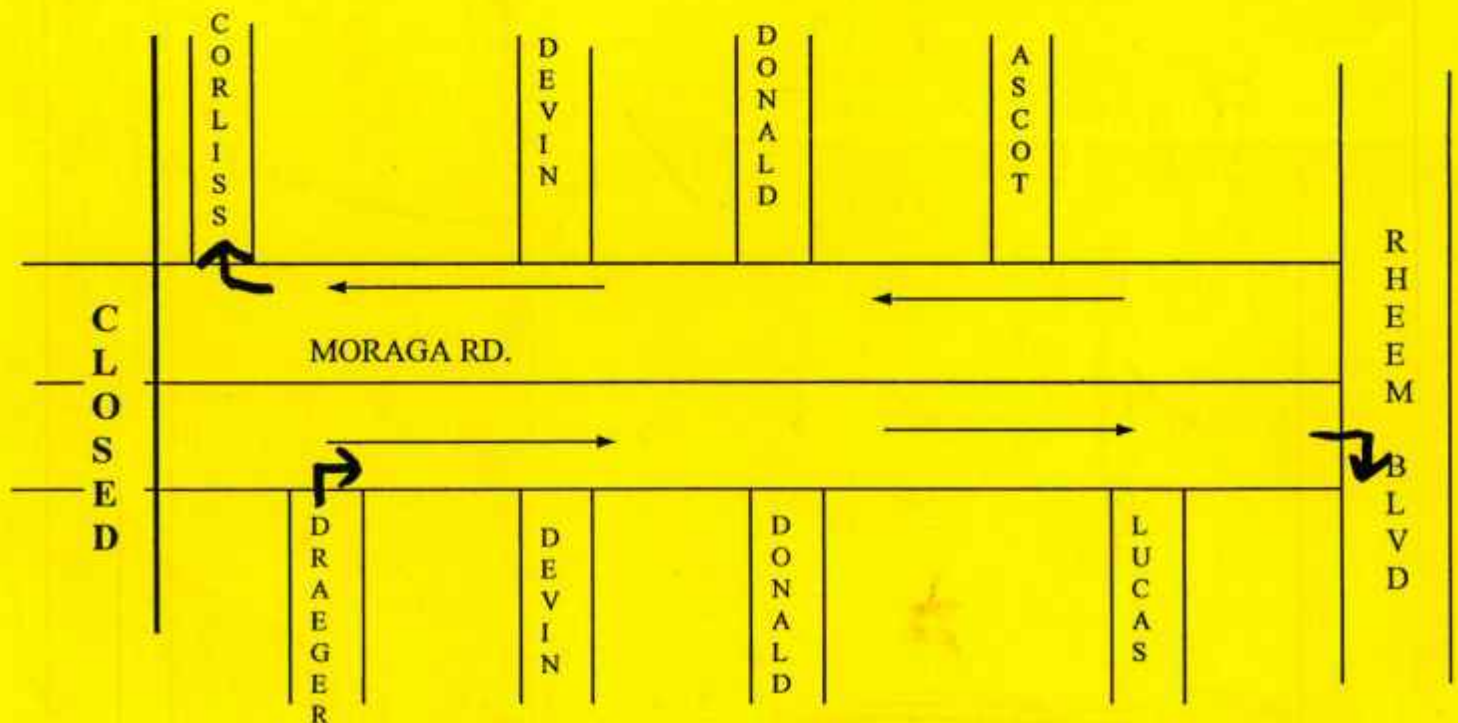
⇒ IF YOU ARE ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE STREET YOU CAN ONLY TURN RIGHT AND TRAVEL TO CORLISS AND TURN RIGHT.

⇒ IF YOU ARE ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE STREET YOU CAN ONLY TURN RIGHT AND TRAVEL TO RHEEM BLVD.

**NO TRAFFIC ACROSS MORAGA RD. WILL BE ALLOWED**

IF YOU NEED TO LEAVE OR RETURN TO YOUR HOME PLEASE DO SO  
BEFORE 10 AM AND AFTER 1PM .

SORRY FOR THE INCONVENIENCE  
**WEST**



**EAST**



TRENT NELSON/SUN

Orinda Fire District's ambulance is used to transport firefighters to medical emergencies. Under a new proposal being considered by the county, the fire district would no longer respond to certain types of medical emergencies, relying instead on the ambulance service based in Lafayette. Currently, both firefighters and the ambulance service respond to all emergencies.

## County considering change in fire district's emergency medical service response plan

By Karen Emanuel  
STAFF WRITER

ORINDA — Contra Costa fire officials are quietly considering a change that would eliminate firefighters as first responders to certain types of non-life threatening medical calls.

Supporters say they are confident the method is an enhancement to a procedure already used and would result in a more efficient use of emergency services.

But others fear the plan is a potential beginning to erosion of the quality of emergency service in Orinda.

### RELATED STORY, PAGE 9

Under the proposal, firefighters would no longer respond to certain non-life threatening injuries. Instead, only ambulance units would respond.

Among such emergencies are amputations or partial separations of body parts below the wrists or ankle where bleeding is controlled, back pain reported by someone who is faint or dizzy or three months pregnant, or an unexpected, complicated home delivery of a baby.

Currently, firefighter units respond to such

calls. In Orinda, firefighters trained in basic life support would initiate basic first aid and provide care before the ambulance arrived.

One concern in Orinda is that, as of last week, neither city or fire officials had been officially notified of the proposal.

Some said they see the situation as a preview of changes that could come as Orinda nears an official merge with other county fire districts.

Bill Gross, acting chairman of the Orinda Fire Commission, said he was surprised and shocked when he heard about the plan.

See CHANGE, Page 2



EDMUND LEE/SUN

Moraga resident Danny Costa, 12, greets the crowd as Joaquin Moraga during the 25th anniversary parade on Saturday.

## Community comes out to celebrate

By Emille Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — Neighbors sat side-by-side on Moraga Road, cheering as half the town drove, galloped or cart-wheeled by in a truly down-home 25th birthday celebration.

Throughout this past weekend, residents took time out to commemorate a way of living — family, community and laughter — that comes together to define Moraga.

"People need a place where some of the greatest traffic jams are caused by animal crossings and you can still find unpaved roads that are unpaved on purpose," Campolindo junior Bryan Bonner shared at Friday night's banquet. "Moraga needs to remain the same."

Festivities kicked off with a gala banquet at Saint Mary's College, coordinated by the Moraga Historical Society. Longtime resident Dick Callahan, known as the voice of the Golden State Warriors and the Saint Mary's Gaels, provided lively banter as the evening's master of ceremonies.

Speakers included incorporation volunteer Bob Merritt, former mayor Margaret DePriester and Brother Mel Anderson, longtime president of Saint Mary's College.

Several local dignitaries also took part. State Sen. Richard Rainey and county Supervisor Gayle Uilkema both shared a personal attachment to the town.

"I was a resident of Moraga when it was incorporated 25 years ago ... this really is a nostalgic thing," Uilkema said. "I hope time in memorium remembers what a special life we've had together and the wonderful things we have done."

Of the 304 guests on hand, several experi-



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/SUN



EDMUND LEE/SUN

Students from the California Academy of Performing Arts, above, entertain during the Moraga Historical Society dinner on Friday at Saint Mary's College. At left, Tom Smith offers a Bartlett pear sample to Florence Lange during the post-parade activities at the Commons on Saturday.



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/SUN

Videographer Jeff Cole documents the celebration on Friday at Saint Mary's. Cherie Grant was on the anniversary committee.

## MORAGA

FROM PAGE 1

enced a true reunion. The town's first planning director, Dave Baker, came all the way from Arizona to reminisce about the making of a town.

"Things are different," Baker said. "But it's still a great town."

Several people who have since passed away were remembered for their invaluable contributions — the town's first mayor Mike Cory, the first town manager Gary Chase and former Sun editor Jane Putnam were felt in spirit.

While Friday's celebration continued late into the evening, many were up early the next morn-

ing for a pancake breakfast or silver run. By 10 a.m. on Saturday, the town was buzzing with parade preparations. Contra Costa Sheriff Department's bagpipers warmed up in the Advanced Mobile Solutions parking lot, Orinda's Volunteer Marching Band got in tune in front of the Rheem Theatre and roller-blading Girl Scouts laced up in the Rheem Center.

The parade proved to be the pinnacle event of the weekend — with native celebrities astronaut Steve Robinson and Olympian Karen Moe Humphreys on hand, as well as several Joaquin Moraga descendants. In all, 80 groups paraded down Moraga Road.

Residents continued their celebration at the Moraga Commons. Music, food and general plan tuto-



EDMUND LEE/SUN

Joaquin Moraga descendants Rachel Moraga, front seat, and Colleen Moraga take part in the parade on Saturday.

rials kept the park packed late into the afternoon. According to pear festival coordinator Tom Smith,

100 pear pies were sold as fast as they were made in the kitchen of Nation's. More pies were con-

sumed later at the Chamber of Commerce's Round-Up.

"A lot of people weren't aware

that pears are somewhat the heritage of the town," Smith said. "We raised that awareness."



SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The Moraga Hacienda Seniors rode in a 1937 Daimler during the 25th anniversary parade.

## Daimler draws notice during parade

By Nathan Sonenshein  
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

When Moraga celebrated its 25th birthday on Oct. 23, the main event was a two-mile parade along Moraga Road. There were more than 80 entries in the parade — marching bands, the Wells Fargo stagecoach drawn by six horses, llamas, girl and boy scouts, a troop of motorcycleists, horse clubs and vintage cars.

Standing out was a 1937 Daimler, which carried three passengers who represented the Moraga Hacienda Seniors.

As you can see from the photograph that accompanies this article, the car was an eye-catcher. A four-door sedan, with an engine casing that seemed to be a mile long, the Daimler was manufactured in England in 1937. It weighs two tons, has a right-hand drive, no power steering or power brakes and makes 14 miles per gallon.

In the '30s, this type of Daimler was used by the British royal family and was honored by being designated "by appointment to the Queen." The name Daimler is becoming better known in the United States as a result of a recent merger, which formed a union

known as Daimler-Benz — from which we recognize the current Mercedes-Benz auto manufacturer, a company that is today a major subsidiary of Daimler Chrysler.

This Daimler is owned by Robin and Heather Bransbury, who moved to Moraga from Sheffield, England, in 1990, having selected Moraga as "a safe and healthful community."

Heather is a member of the Moraga Hacienda Seniors, who likes our monthly book reviews, and Robin is an impressive 6-footer, with a full beard topped by bright blue eyes that reflect his jolly demeanor. For the parade, he wore a Sherlock Holmes hat and smoked a large, curved meerschaum pipe. He attracted as much attention from the parade watchers as his Daimler,

which has been in his family for several generations. Having recently come into ownership, he imported it to Moraga a few months ago just in time for our parade.

Heather rode "shotgun" in the left front seat and was a gracious hostess for the "royal" passengers representing the Moraga Hacienda Seniors. They were Iris Hart, Norma Heath and myself. We thoroughly enjoyed the ride and the enthusiastic greetings we received from the parade watchers.

As "our" car moved along slowly and sedately in the procession, literally dozens of onlookers ran out to the car with the question "What kind of car?" "What year?" Robin would cheerfully respond "It's a Daimler. 1937" and toot his horn.

## A two-day party set in Moraga

MORAGA — The town's birthday bash promises to be remembered for the next 25 years.

Events begin on Friday with the Moraga Historical Society banquet. Longtime Saint Mary's president Brother Mel Anderson will join community members for a night of reminiscing, along with performances by the California Academy of Performing Arts and the Saint Mary's NightinGals. The 25th anniversary video, compiled by Campolindo graduate Jeff Cole, also will be unveiled.

Festivities begin at 6 p.m. in the Soda Center at Saint Mary's College, with a reception put on by the wives of the first Town Council.

Saturday's activities start early with a 7:15 a.m. silver run sponsored by the Lafayette Moraga Youth Association. Non-athletes can enjoy a pancake breakfast hosted by Moraga-Orinda firefighters.

A parade begins at 10 a.m., with

several bands, local celebrities, llamas, horses and much more. Participants will march down Moraga Road from Rheem to the Moraga shopping center. Moraga Road will be partially closed between Rheem Boulevard and St. Mary's Road until 1 p.m. Access from side roads will be available.

The rest of the day, community members can enjoy the pear festival, food booths, a mariachi band, a Lamorinda Arts Alliance art exhibit and music by Tommy and the Four Speeds. The town will also have five booths set up to involve residents in the general plan update process. Activities will include information displays as well as plenty of chances to lend a voice.

The celebration will conclude with the Chamber of Commerce's Round-Up, a Western barbecue and dance beginning at 5 p.m. on the Old Moraga Ranch. For tickets, call 376-0150. 10-20-99

11-3-99

Contra Costa Sun

# Moraga's 25th anniversary bash merges with Homecoming fest

Citizens of Moraga had two homecomings last week, with Campolindo's annual celebration as well as the town parade.

As Moraga celebrated its 25th anniversary, famous Campolindo graduates such as astronaut Steve Robinson and Olympic medalist Karen Moe Humphreys returned home.

Campolindo's Homecoming week festivities were surrounded by positive changes but also by controversy.

The overall theme was half-hour sitcoms. For the first time, teachers were allowed to participate in the events. "Happy Days," a show on the life of a few high school kids in the '50s, was chosen by the administration and faculty.

The seniors represented "Saved by the Bell," an '80s TV show depicting the high school experiences of six students. "Seinfeld" about the adventures of four New Yorkers, was the sitcom chosen by the junior class. The sophomores chose the popular "Friends," based on six friends and also centered in New York. The freshmen portrayed "Gilligan's Island," an old sitcom about survivors of a shipwreck living on a desolate island.

For many years, the Homecoming floats have remained stationary. This year, they were placed on flat-bed trucks and driven around the track during the football game's half-time show and later through Moraga in the anniversary parade.

"This year, we really put our heads together," said sophomore Tyler Carlson. "We made many changes building the floats."

Traditionally, the floats are made out of paper flowers. Other objects, such as couches, tables and windows, were used this year to create the sitcom scenes. People were allowed to ride on the floats for the first time, with crowned royalty and elected leadership members for each class sitting atop each float.



EDMUND LEE/SUN

The Campolindo Homecoming floats were featured in the 25th anniversary parade on Saturday in Moraga. Using the theme of TV sitcoms, the junior class created a "Seinfeld" parody.



**CAMPO**

By Emily Vollmer

During Friday's Homecoming rally, each class performed a skit based on their sitcom and indirectly made fun of the other classes.

All skits are rehearsed the day before so teachers can make sure they are appropriate. However, the seniors supposedly changed wording and performed an unapproved skit about two members of their sitcom competing for the same girl. The script included references to drug use and a controversial Website and also poked fun at specific people.

Although it is undecided whether the students will be punished, Principal Tom Ehrhorn apologized to the student body for any pain the skit may have caused.

"I was very disappointed. Many people — parents, students and teachers — were hurt. I wish now

that I had pulled the plug," Ehrhorn said. "It will not happen again."

Powder Puff, an annual homecoming event in which girls from different grades play football, was a big success this year. The final games were played on Thursday night, underneath the bright lights on the football field. Typically games have been played at lunchtime on the soccer field.

"Playing under the lights made us feel like real important players," said sophomore Heather Dillow. "It gave us a sense of pride, like it was worth something."

The following night, the football team battled Mt. Diablo. With non-stop crowd support, the Campolindo Cougars charged ahead of the Mt. Diablo Red Devils with a score of 41-14.

On Saturday night, couples got together in the gymnasium to finish off the exciting week with the Homecoming dance. As they danced to popular music, the students could look up and admire their class murals — scenes painted by classmates decorating each wall.

10-27-99  
Cortez Costa Sun

# Cost an issue for Moraga fire station

By Emille Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — Conceptual plans for a new fire station on Moraga Road were approved last week, despite questions about the cost of the project.

Plans to replace the 40-year-old station on Rheem Boulevard were first presented about one year ago, with an original estimated cost of \$2.25 million. Last Tuesday, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board reviewed designs for a 6,800 sq. ft. station at a cost of \$189 per square foot — with a total of \$2.329 million.

"It's incumbent on us to have a program for the payment of the construction of this before we get too far down the road with design," said fire board director John Wyro.

The board's facility committee has been working with architectural firm Don Dommer Associates to design a station that meets state and federal safety mandates, melds with the community and gives the district possibilities for growth.

"Contingencies of possibilities in the future were built in," said Fire Chief Jim Johnston. "If we should ever decide to increase staffing, we

have a mechanism in place to create the expansion without going through a lot of building modification."

The current station sits on a site with severe drainage problems, while the station itself does not meet many modern requirements.

The new station would take up 30 percent to 40 percent of a two-acre plot next to Lucas Road. The overall design concept would be California Mission, creating a continuity of form along the town's main scenic corridor. Construction is slated to begin in June 2000.

Facility committee member Gordon Nathan said that many items on the new station's original wish list were pared down to absolute necessities.

"We didn't want to build a Taj Mahal," said Battalion Chief Greg Holm. "We wanted a building that would be pleasing to the firefighters and the community, we didn't try to build a monument to ourselves."

Holm likened the facility to a 3,800 sq. ft. home with a large garage. Wrapped around a courtyard, the station would have three bedrooms, a dayroom, kitchen and dining room as well as office space, a public foyer and restroom.

There would be access to outside yard activities and room for a dozen staff parking spaces and a limited amount of public parking. At 70 feet deep, the apparatus bay would fit three pieces of equipment with room for drive-through — with a maximum height reduced from 35 to 28 feet.

"It's civic but also reduced in scale, non-institutional but at the same time a government look," said architect Don Dommer. "Having the apparatus bay showing explains what a fire station is all about."

The board approved conceptual design plans in order to allow the project to go before the town's Planning Commission later this month.

In the meantime, district staff will be comparing original cost estimates with current projections to determine what is affordable.

"I am deeply concerned with whether we have the ability to remain within budget," said fire board director Pete Wilson. "The last thing I want to see is for this fire district to go before the public with the theory that this is going to cost \$2 million and have it cost \$3 million. I think that is a big breach of public confidence."

## St. Mary's pays for new fire truck

MORAGA — It's to be called the Spirit of Saint Mary's. The Moraga-Orinda Fire District's newest fire truck will be equipped with a 100-foot ariel ladder to reach the highest points around town.

The \$750,000 truck — purchased with a \$650,000 gift from Saint Mary's College — will replace a 20-year-old truck. It should arrive in Moraga next fall.

"I'm kind of in a position where it doesn't matter what we say, it's going to be an understatement of how much we appreciate this," said Fire Chief Jim Johnston.

Johnston broached the idea of a joint purchase with Brother Craig Franz, president of Saint Mary's, when he joined the district two years ago and realized that current equipment was not capable of reaching the upper floors of the college's dormitories, as well as apartment buildings on Ascot Drive.

The gift is considered a fair share donation — Saint Mary's is not required to pay the district through property taxes or fire flow taxes. About 2.5 percent of the district's emergency calls go to the college.

## Saint Mary's to Buy Fire District New Truck

MORAGA — Saint Mary's College will buy the Moraga-Orinda Fire District a new custom-built fire truck that could cost as much as \$650,000.

The truck, to be named "The Spirit of Saint Mary's," is still being researched and needs to be ordered. But the district hopes to acquire a state-of-the-art truck at least 46 feet long with a 93-foot ladder. The Saint Mary's College campus lies within the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

# Noise, parking concerns with new fire station

By Emille Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — Approval of a proposed Moraga Road fire station was continued by the Planning Commission on Monday, in order to allow the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to address several quality of life issues.

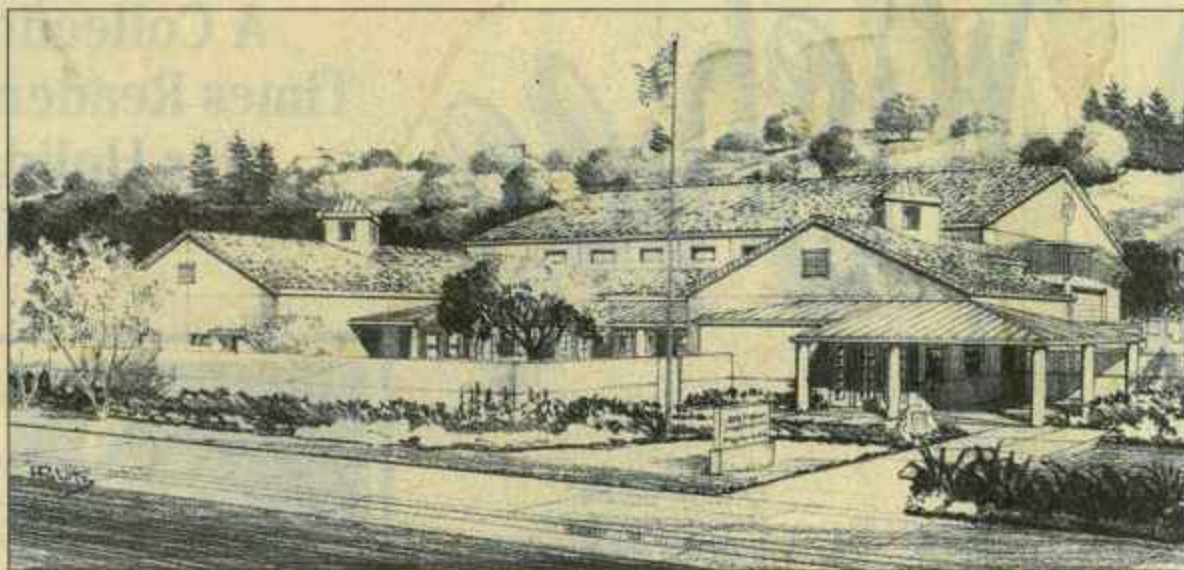
Neighbors of the site — at the corner of Lucas Drive — voiced several concerns, particularly about the noise impacts of a fire station.

"My house backs onto the project," said Nigel Crouch, a resident of Williams Drive. "With the detrimental impacts on homeowners, I'm generally not in favor of a fire station at this site."

The district was asked to come back to the commission in January with results of a noise impact study and further discussion with neighbors. "I'd feel more comfortable if the dialogue went another round," said Commissioner Richard Craig. "It sounds like we're most of the way there."

Among issues to be discussed is a noise mitigation proposal. The district would plant redwood trees along the edge of adjoining Moraga Place property to buffer sound.

"We're willing to go ahead and volunteer the trees and drip irrigation system if we can work out lia-



SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The proposed fire station on Moraga Road would replace the Rheem Boulevard station.

bility issues," said Fire Chief Jim Johnston.

The station, first proposed in January 1998, would replace the 40-year-old Rheem Boulevard station. Serious drainage and ventilation problems, as well as insufficient size, have made that building unsuitable.

Designed by architect Don Dommer, the 6,815 sq. ft. station would have two wings for living space wrapped around a courtyard. An adjoining apparatus bay would be backed against a steep hill.

Plans presented to the commis-

sion also included the possibility of a 1,000 sq. ft. addition in the future — should the station be expanded to accommodate two engines or an engine and an ambulance.

"There is no current plan to actually add another engine company or ambulance there," Johnston pointed out. "If we ever had to come back and add on, we just wanted to make sure there was a spot to do it and to be able to tie it into the existing structure."

However, the majority of the commissioners opposed a conceptu-

al addition and instead expressed support for a use permit that would allow for only one engine company.

"If it's needed in the future, it can be designed in the future," said Commissioner Steve Woebleke.

Commissioners also raised concerns about the location of a proposed gas tank, as well as a suitable number of parking spaces.

With alterations to the district's proposal alleviating these and other concerns, the commission anticipated approval of the project at the Jan. 3 meeting.

## LAMORINDA BRIEFS

### Fire district studies noise impacts

Following through on Planning Commission directives, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board approved plans for an acoustical study that will determine a proposed fire station's noise impact on neighbors.

The district was asked to complete a study after neighbors up the hill from the Moraga Road site expressed opposition to the project earlier this month. Several Williams Drive residents asked how the district intended to buffer sound from the 6,815 sq. ft. station. Fire Chief Jim Johnston agreed with a neighbor's proposal to plant a row of redwood trees. However, others weren't sure that would be enough.

The study, to be carried out by San Francisco consultant Charles Salter, was determined to be the best way to measure potential impacts and mitigation measures. Four days of acoustical measurement near the neighbors will look at possible noise from the district's diesel truck and its siren, as well as an emergency generator and fire personnel talking or playing basketball.

At an estimated cost of \$8,500, the study should be completed by the end of this week.

## LAMORINDA BRIEFS

### Moraga planners OK fire station

MORAGA — The Planning Commission unanimously approved plans for a new fire station on Moraga Road last week. Reviewing results of a noise and lighting study, the board decided that the station would be an appropriate addition to the town's main scenic corridor.

Following directives from the commission, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District had hired an audio consultant to assess the station's noise impacts. The consultant concluded that impacts would be minimal, despite continued concerns from neighbors. However, the fire district has agreed to plant a row of redwood trees along a hill above the station to act as a noise buffer.

Plans for the station were reviewed by the Design Review Board on Tuesday, after the Sun's deadline. Fire Chief Jim Johnston said that following DRB approval, the district hopes to have construction design plans drawn up — with construction to begin within the next several months.

## An update on Moraga-Orinda fire district

By Gordon Nathan

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District is now 30 months old, and as the now famous saying goes: "You have come a long way, baby!"

With the year 2000 upon us, I would like to thank our communities for their support and assistance over the past 2 1/2 years. I would also like to take this opportunity to report to our citizens what efforts have been made to improve service and what the communities can expect in the future to enhance and strengthen the fire district's commitment to first-class fire protection and emergency medical services.

Through the efforts of many community residents, our new fire district was established as an independent district on July 1, 1997. Since that beginning, the new Board of Directors has selected an experienced and very capable fire chief who has the same vision as the communities of Moraga and Orinda — to have the finest fire protection and emergency medical services in Northern California.

We have embarked on a very ambitious five-year strategic plan that will be our roadmap to success in the year 2000 and beyond. The only way for this vision to come to fruition is through the support of the communities and that of our dis-

trict's very capable staff.

At this time, we are ahead of schedule on many of the projects and services outlined in the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) application when the two former dependent districts were combined into one independent district.

Since July 1997, the fire district has been improving emergency medical services. With the recent addition of four paramedics, the district will have full-time, advanced life support services from all five fire stations beginning Jan. 1, 2000. This means there will be a paramedic on each of the engine companies, along with the two ambulances — a first in Contra Costa County.

In addition, the seismic retrofitting of Station 45 (located on Orinda Way) is complete and we are in the process of planning the rebuilding of Station 42 (currently located on Rheem Boulevard).

Effective July 1, 1999, the board combined the financial accounts of the two former districts (exclusive of the two service zone's fire-flow taxes) to allow for a more streamlined administrative process.

The district is working closely with the citizens of Orinda and the East Bay Municipal Utilities District on the water supply issues facing the community, as well as con-

tinued community education on fire hazard mitigation.

The district's new Adopt A School program has begun, and each engine company will make regular visits to our primary and secondary schools to enhance the education of our students in fire prevention and safety.

There are so many programs being developed by our professional and dedicated staff that it is impossible to address them all in this letter, but you may wish to turn to our Website (MOFD.org) to learn about the many facets of your fire district.

I recently paid a visit to all shifts at each of the fire stations, and I can report to you that comments such as "moving ahead," "light years ahead" and "a sense of direction" coming from staff members is music to my ears. It means that we are truly moving in the right direction.

Everyone is pitching in to make our new district a successful, first-class community life safety service. With the communities' support, we will continue to provide the highest level of public and emergency medical services.

The community and the district have reached many of our goals in just 30 months, and as your 1999 board president, I have been proud to be a part of these efforts.

## Consider fire safety if power is out

Conserving power and the prospect of limited power is on many people's minds.

Therefore, officials at the Moraga-Orinda Fire District believe it's important for people to also think about safety.

When there is no heat (or limited heat) and there is no lighting (or limited lighting), people turn to old-fashioned open flames. The Moraga-Orinda Fire District wants to remind all residents of the potential hazards of using open flames as an extra source of heat and lighting.

When using a fireplace to heat your home, remember to use a hearth screen. This protects the room from sparks that may leave the fireplace.

Never leave your fireplace unattended and before you leave your home or go to bed, make sure your fire is out.

Your family may choose to use a space heater that uses a liquid fuel to produce heat. These appliances need space. This means there needs to be minimum space from combustibles around the sides, back and front of the appliance. Check the user instructions for the proper distances for your heater. Thirty-six inches of clearance to the front and 18 inches to the sides are generally good distances.

Candles are a popular way to provide extra light, but they are also a leading cause of home fires. Don't leave candles burning when you leave your home. If you must leave a room that has a burning candle, move combustibles away from the candle and keep the candle in a safe, non-combustible container.

Keep in mind, fires have started from candles that have been placed in glass containers. Your safest

course of action is to blow out candles when you leave a room.

Remember, never leave children unattended when an open flame is present.

When walking from one room to the next in your home, don't use an unprotected candle. Your safest and most reliable alternate lighting is a flashlight.

If you or your family have an emergency, dial 911 immediately. Essential services (your fire department and police department) have emergency backup power, and PG&E continues to provide essential services power differently than residential service. This means your emergency response will not be affected.

As we all move through this power crisis, fire safety needs to be a part of our conscience. If you have questions about fire safety, call the M-O Fire District at 258-4599.

## MORAGA – ORINDA FIRE DISTRICT

*Invites you to join us in celebrating the highest  
level of Emergency Medical Services  
for our community*

*Announcing:*

*The County's first  
full time paramedic engine companies*

DATE: January 21, 2000

TIME: 3:00 – 4:30 PM

PLACE: Station 41

1280 Moraga Way, Moraga

RSVP by January 17, 2000 (925) 258-4531

### PROGRAM

*Hors d' oeuvres and refreshments*

#### WELCOME

*Jim Johnston, Fire Chief*

#### SPEAKERS

*Pete Wilson, President*

Moraga – Orinda Fire District  
Board of Directors

*John Kennedy, President*

Rescue One Foundation

*Bill Lindsay, City Manager*

City of Orinda

*Ross Hubbard, Town Manager*

Town of Moraga

*Dr. Joseph Barger, Director*

Contra Costa County  
Emergency Medical System

*Rob Goodyear, Battalion Chief*

#### RECEPTION

*1-21-2000*

# Paramedics boost emergency services

## All three cities now have more support

By Emilie Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

Thirty years ago, Lamorinda residents in need of emergency medical services depended on on-site personnel with little more than Band-Aid abilities, followed by a long wait for an ambulance.

More often than not, life-threatening situations were left in the hands of fate.

"You'd call the main number here at the station if you could remember it," recalled Moraga-Orinda Fire District battalion chief Rob Goodyear, who came to Moraga in 1972. "A crew goes out trained in advanced first aid ... and along with that comes an ambulance from somewhere out there and it takes 30 to 40 min-

utes to get here."

These days, ambulance response time hovers around 10 minutes. And before that, paramedics are on scene to begin administering advanced life-saving care.

"The patient gets a high standard of care immediately upon the arrival of the first engine, all the way through to the hospital," said Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Jim Johnston.

Since the beginning of this year, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District has been able to respond to emergency medical situations with a paramedic on every engine — 24 hours a day. Providing this service one year ahead of schedule, the district is the first entity in the county to supply paramedic service at this level.

Moraga resident Jennifer Schnayer learned first-hand that response time is vital in an emergency situation.

"When the paramedics got to our home, they could not find my blood pressure and my pulse was very weak," she

wrote in a recent letter to Moraga-Orinda paramedics. "They rushed me to the hospital, where I had emergency surgery within 10 minutes of my arrival. As I thanked the doctors for saving my life, they explained without the quick-thinking and acting of these men, I would have died."

Moraga-Orinda hired four additional paramedics in order to accommodate its new level of service. Local 1230 representatives worked with district management to come up with a plan that would enable the extra staffing.

With an average level of 22 years' experience, the district's paramedics engage in quarterly partner training with emergency medical technicians (EMTs), periodic technical training and a wide variety of quality assessment reviews.

"This (new program) exposes more medics to being first responders," said Nancy Daniel, the district's quality assurance nurse. "Those medics get to use

their skills frequently."

Through a pilot program of Contra Costa County Consolidated Fire District, emergency medical calls in Lafayette have received immediate paramedic response for the past year.

"(The paramedic program) is something that is unanimously supported by people and is something people are willing to pay for," said county Supervisor Gayle Uilkema of Lafayette. "I hope that County Fire can move as quickly and swiftly as Moraga-Orinda has."

Eight of the county's 30 engines have paramedics on board. However, due to Lafayette's lower call volume, one paramedic responds to every medical call out of the three stations within city limits. Paramedics with American Medical Response then arrive with an ambulance to transport the patient.

"It's a real team effort — we get there

See PARAMEDICS, Page 2

## PARAMEDICS

FROM PAGE 1

initially and do what we do, then they arrive and take over," said county paramedic Chris Allen.

The district is conducting a feasibility study to see if this service could be expanded county-wide.

"The goal is to get paramedics on-scene within the first five minutes of a call and do it within the confines of our budget," said Steve Maiero, county chief of emergency services.

According to Allen, the Lafayette-based paramedic faces different challenges than personnel based on engine companies or in an ambulance.

Driving a separate vehicle based out of the Mount Diablo Boulevard station, Allen must negotiate his own way to a call.

"First of all, I can't think about the patient, I have to think about how do I get there," he said.

Typically the first paramedic to arrive on scene, he may have to make immediate assessments on his own. However, Allen works with personnel responding on the engine, trained as emergency medical technicians, to create a fluid team approach.

"People don't come with a label on their foreheads," Allen said. "Very seldom does a person just have a cardiac problem. Oftentimes, it's difficult figuring out what's going on right now with this patient. ... We have to funnel all this information into one diagnosis."



STEVE BABULJAK/SUN

Lafayette paramedic Chris Allen drives to a 911 call of a man with chest pains in Lafayette on Saturday. He and three other crew members from the Lafayette Fire Department were the first on the scene, followed by an ambulance from American Medical Response.

Despite such challenges, Allen emphasizes that a paramedic's most important role is to be there for the patient.

"You see them at their worst, for the most

part," he said. "We need to support them emotionally. One of the things I try to do is be honest with people. ... A lot of it is how you present yourself. It's about understanding their situation."

Contra Costa Sun

1-26-2000

## A Stellar Performance!



LYNDA LEONARD

Moraga-Orinda Fire District officials (L to R) Gordon Nathan, director; Fire Chief Jim Johnston; Pete Wilson, president; Peter Scurr, vice president; and John Wyro, director, at the unveiling of the new paramedic fire engine.

## Paramedics Now on All Fire Engines

Since January 1, all Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) engines have been staffed with one paramedic per company. The paramedic has a special compartment on the fire engine for all the necessary equipment, including medications and a LIFE-PAC 12, which is a combination heart monitor and defibrillator.

MOFD paramedics are the first para-

medics in Contra Costa County to be able to use a 12-lead EKG with the LIFE-PAC 12 in the field and to fax the results by cell phone to the emergency room doctor and/or cardiologist. Fire Chief Jim Johnston said, "Because of this new technology, the citizens of MOFD are assured the highest level of pre-hospital care and advanced life support."

6 - Contra Costa Sun

Wednesday, February 23, 2000

## RAY'S OF HOPE

# Residents join board of new health group

By Emilie Karrick  
STAFF WRITER

**Big giver:** Proving to have a big heart, local "Big Guy" John Cullen recently donated the \$1,000 he was given by Rochester Big and Tall to the Rescue One Foundation.

Cullen, an Orinda resident, was recognized through the San Francisco-based clothing store's "Big Guys are Good Guys" program, which awards one recipient per market a \$500 gift certificate and a \$1,000 donation to his favorite charity. Cullen was nominated as the local "Big Guy" by a friend for being an important part of his community. He chose to give his dona-

tion to Rescue One, a non-profit foundation that raises money for paramedic services in Moraga and Orinda, because he believes they support a valuable asset.

"Paramedics are something that we all have to call on one day," Cullen said. "Most people don't know that they need funding."

For more information about Rescue One, call 376-8171.

Page 20

Contra Costa Sun  
March 15, 2000



SUNBEAMS

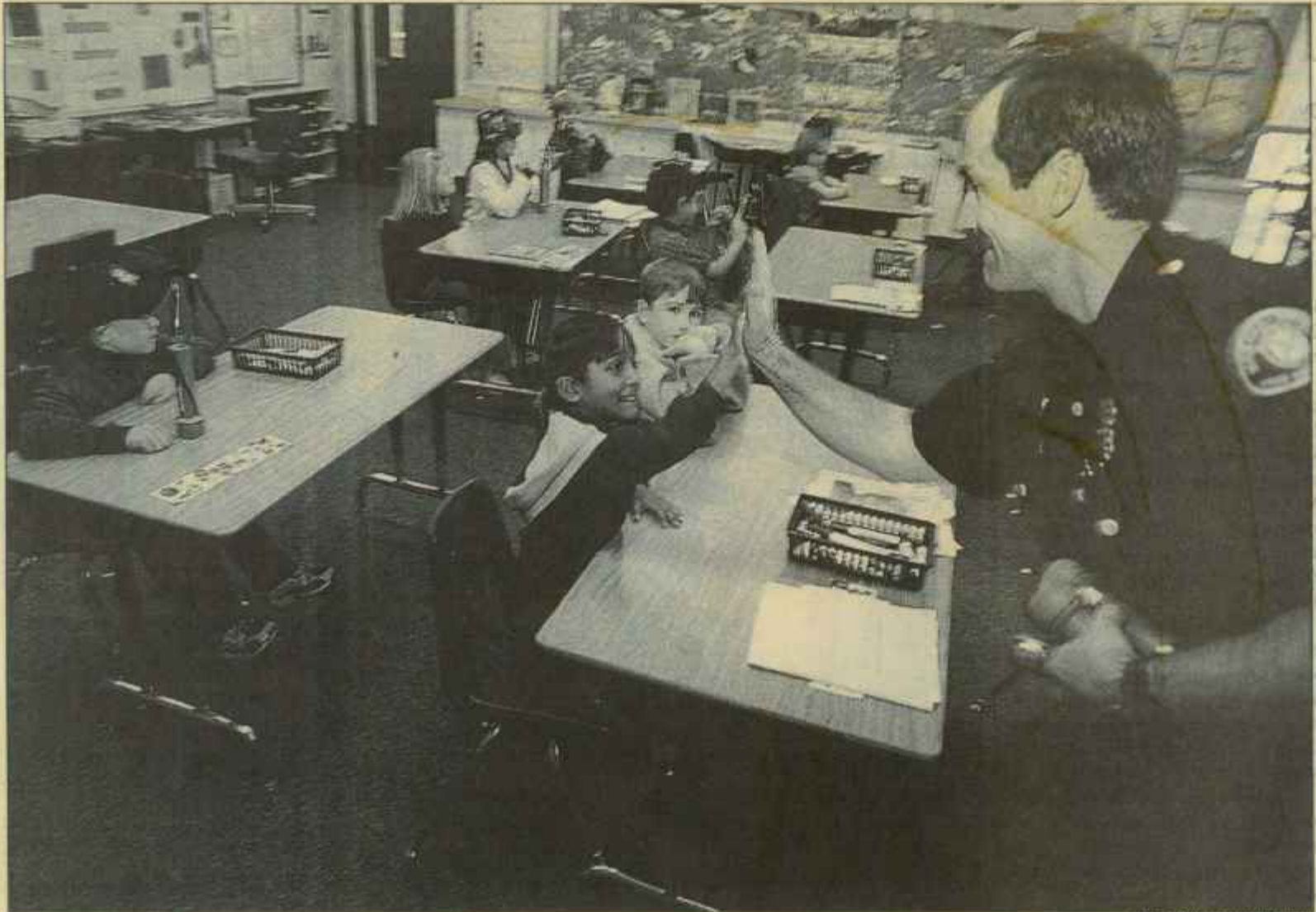
By Harriet Ainsworth

## It's getting safer hereabouts

**MORAGA-ORINDA DISTRICT IS FIRED UP:** Jim Johnston, Moraga-Orinda fire chief (he has degrees in fire science, political science and law from Santa Clara) told Moraga Rotarians the district is 63 miles square, with a population of 34,000. That's a lot to watch, but Jim pointed out the fire stations are racking up a five- to six-minute response times to any situation. It is the first and only department in the county to have a certified paramedic on duty with each engine company. Each station is "manned" by three persons, 24 hours, on three-day rotating shifts. With women now in most departments, the sleeping arrangements consist of three separate bedrooms with private facilities and two beds, to allow any arrangement of personnel, with the extra bed made up by the incoming firefighter.

I had thought that as a fervent supporter of equality of the sexes, I'd have to give up in this one case: Surely a slight woman could not compete with a large strong man in, say, rescuing heavy injured, endangered folks. But Jim threw that impression out the window fast. "We have stringent standards physically as well as academically," he said. "I've conducted physical tests wherein someone 6-2, weighing 200 pounds, could not compete with a 5-5, 120-pound contender." Such expert coordination in a smaller person may be the result of more emphasis on women's sports during the last two decades, he adjudges.

**GOOD NEWS** anent the recent spate of cardiac arrests that have attacked prominent Orindans, such as the late Dr. Gale Whiting and suffering veteran volunteer leader Del Loper. Besides on the firetrucks, Jim says all the police cars in the district now carry computerized defibrillators, with every officer trained to use them. "We hope eventually to place these life-saving devices at, for instance, the community centers and golf courses," Jim advises. Now *that's* progress.



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/SUN

Moraga-Orinda Fire District engineer-paramedic Mark Watson trades a high-five for a flashlight with Rheem School second-grader Arjun Madra during a fire safety talk at the Moraga school last month.

5-3-2000 CC Sun

**THEY'RE FIRED-UP GOLFERS:** They'll tee off for Rescue One Foundation, and they've already raised close to \$6,000 for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's paramedics and ambulances with state-of-the-art equipment that get help where it's needed for emergencies within those crucial first few minutes. Moraga Country Club golfers, both men and women, will vie for the Moraga Cup this Saturday, May 6, in their first annual philanthropic tournament with all proceeds to go to the foundation, reports Moraga's **Sally Duval**.

Now that's a great drive to put funds in a good place, if you'll pardon the pun.

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Contra Costa Sun 1-3-2001

## OUR READERS SAY

### A community thank you note

As the year comes to a close and my tenure on the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors ends, I am drawn to reflect on all that has happened to our community as a result of efforts on behalf of the district.

I want to thank the community, those who have been engaged in the district, attending meetings, raising funds and awareness and, most importantly, the men and women of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District who have served us so well.

We have achieved so much in 3 1/2 short years. Moraga has an improved paramedic service and Orinda now has a paramedic service that did not exist in 1997. And both communities have become one when it comes to fire protection and emergency medical care.

In the new year, each of us should pledge to give something back to the community — be it a book for the library, time at our schools, attendance at a local agency meeting to share your thoughts or serving on one of the many boards and commissions that make our community work to be the special place we call our home. By giving a little, you receive so much.

We are blessed, I feel particularly so and wanted to say thank you for the opportunity to serve.

**John Wyro, Orinda**

**Moraga-Orinda Fire District**

**April 15, 2000**

**From 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

# Spring Open House



The Moraga-Orinda Fire District is having a spring open house at  
33 Orinda Way on Saturday April 15 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

The theme for this event is "Disaster Preparedness"

Everyone is welcome to tour the fire station, sit in the fire engine  
and talk to the firefighters and firefighter paramedics.

Bring your families disaster plan or your home fire evacuation plan and get a prize!

## **Highlights**

- ◆ Rescue One Foundation
- ◆ Personal Property Fire Water Pump demonstration
- ◆ Get your blood pressure taken
- ◆ Local vendors and agencies

## **Moraga-Orinda Fire District**

33 Orinda Way  
Orinda, CA 94563

Phone: (925) 259-4599  
Fax: (925) 259-4595  
web site: [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org)

## Two seats available on fire board

Two seats will be available on the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board in the November election.

John Wyro of Division 5 — everything north of Highway 24 in Orinda — cannot run again because he moved out of the division. Ben Ho of Division 2 — north/east Moraga — has said he will run as an incumbent.

The filing period for applications opens Monday, July 17, and closes Friday, Aug. 11.

Citizens must reside in Division 5 or Division 2 to be eligible to run for the board, which controls policy for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. The board meets every third Wednesday of the month. Each term is four years.

This is the first election since the joint district was formed in 1997. Pete Wilson of Division 3, Peter Scurr of Division 4 and Gordon Nathan of Division 1 will continue on the board next year.

To file for candidacy, go to the district office at 33 Orinda Way in Orinda or call 258-4599 for more information.

# Fire district holds off on naming of stations

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Before a decision can be made on whether fire stations can be named after individuals, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board would like more information pertaining directly to the issue.

Following further research, the board will create a policy on the matter.

The idea of naming a fire station after someone was raised by board member Gordon Nathan. He wanted to name the new Moraga fire station — to be built on Moraga Boulevard — after Mike Cory, Moraga's first mayor and a former member of the Moraga Fire District board (before it was consolidated with Orinda).

"He was well-liked by the board, district, staff and community at large," Nathan said. "It would be an honor to Mike and his family — in remembrance of his civic duties."

Board members believed, however, that before they could consider naming a fire station after a community member, they would have to create a designated process.

"I like the idea of remembering people who have been involved in the community," said board member John Wyro. "But I think it is important to have a procedure to go about doing this, including outreach to the community."

Wyro added that perhaps there were residents who wanted to nominate someone to be honored.

Other board members did not like the idea of naming fire stations after people and suggested alternatives, such as memorial gardens or a bust.

"I would like to honor Mike Cory, but not in this way," said board member Peter Scurr. "We refer to fire stations by their number. I am not in favor of naming fire stations after anybody."

District counsel William Ross is researching specific policies regarding the matter, including one in Los Angeles.

Nathan mentioned that a precedence exists, since Orinda has named rooms in the memory of individuals who have contributed significantly to the district.

Board president Pete Wilson, however, said that "if we are going to consider somebody, then that person should have made a significant contribution to this new district — that is extremely important."

He went on to say that he did not see the merit in naming a station after a former board member.

"This honor should be reserved to the staff, the firefighter — these are the people whose lives are on the line and are using these houses," Wilson said.

Moraga resident Richard Olson pointed out that perhaps the town of Moraga was thinking of naming the proposed Town Center after their first mayor.

Town manager Karen Stein said that while there has been discussion about naming something after Cory, no decisions have been made.

## Moraga firehouse building starts

Cost of the new structure, which is expected to be finished in June, has climbed to \$2 million

By Andy Jokelson  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — Construction is scheduled to begin Tuesday on a long-awaited Moraga firehouse whose price tag has climbed to nearly \$2 million.

"We're paying more for the construction, but we're finally off and running, so I think that part of it is super," said Pete Wilson, president of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board.

The district had budgeted almost

\$1.7 million for the project, based on a consultant's estimate.

But when it opened seven companies' bids for the construction contract, the lowest was \$1.95 million by Sierra Bay Construction. The next two lowest bids were within \$75,000 of Sierra Bay's offer.

"The fact that we had three bids so close just confirmed that that's what the market is," said board member John Wyro.

If the board had rejected all bids, new ones probably would have been higher because of the booming economy and the plethora of work that contractors have, Wyro said.

Fire Chief Jim Johnston said he expects construction to finish in June and that firefighters can move in by the end of that month.

The contract gives Sierra Bay 280 days from the board's Aug. 16 award to complete construction. The contract amount payable to Sierra Bay drops \$1,000 a day for every day beyond 280, Johnston said.

Because of the firehouse's increased cost, the board temporarily deferred a \$258,000 purchase of two engines that would be used to help fight wildland fires.

The district will erect the one-story, 6,815-square-foot firehouse on a 1.7-acre Moraga Road site, near Lucas Drive, that it bought for \$475,000. Firefighters will be able to drive in and out without having to back up.

The firehouse will replace a Rheem Boulevard station that has been plagued by mold, dampness and other problems. Firefighters moved



**FIRE CHIEF JIM JOHNSTON** expects construction to finish in June and that firefighters can move in by the end of that month.

out of the Rheem firehouse in 1998 as a health precaution and live in a portable structure on the site.

The district will use about 1.4 acres of the Moraga Road site and hopes to sell the other three-tenths

of an acre, Wyro said. It also intends to sell the Rheem property.

Andy Jokelson covers Lamorinda. Reach him at 925-943-8379 or [ajokelson@cctimes.com](mailto:ajokelson@cctimes.com).



**James J. Johnston**  
**Fire Chief**

Moraga-Orinda Fire District  
33 Orinda Way  
Orinda, CA 94563

Phone: (925) 258-4599  
Fax: (925) 258-4595

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August 25, 2000

Ms. Jane Reiff  
703 Moraga Rd.  
Moraga, CA 94556

Dear Ms. Reiff:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to invite you to the ceremonial groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Station 42.

**Tuesday, August 29<sup>th</sup>**  
**10 am**  
**555 Moraga Road (construction site)**

Construction of our new facility, which begins on Tuesday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, marks the culmination of a thorough planning process that incorporated the collective vision of our Board and the public we serve. You were an important part of that process and we would be honored if you could join us as we start the final phase of the project, construction of the building, related site work, landscaping and off-site improvements. Without the insight you and others provided, we would not be where we are today – an acknowledged provider of the highest level of emergency and public service for the communities we serve.

I hope you will be able to join us on Tuesday and I look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James J. Johnston".

James J. Johnston  
Fire Chief

# Local clergy volunteer to help during emergencies

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Bob Cox remembers many times comforting a wife who had just discovered her husband dead in the bathroom. He would stay as long as he could, but eventually the paramedic team needed to leave.

"It always saddened me to leave a grieving widow with the police and the coroners on the way," said the captain and paramedic for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

Starting this week, staff of the fire district will be able to call a local clergyman in times of distress. Whether it be at an emergency scene or for themselves, the personnel will have access to four local clergymen who will be on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"When you're shaken to your roots by your loss, you kind of grab for your faith," said Cox.

When he was first approached by fire chief Jim Johnston about the chaplain program, Cox said he was eager to take on the project.

"It's right up my alley — I'm really into community service," Cox said.

Johnston said he had seen the benefits of a chaplain program in other districts, such as San Ramon and Fremont.

"It is a real positive service that is going to be available to the community," Johnston said. "It is

just one more thing to add to the excellent service that the fire district provides."

Before the initiation of the district's chaplain program, fire crews depended on the Walnut Creek Police Department's Trauma Intervention Unit for trauma support and counseling. Cox said that while that program is top-rate, he agreed with Johnston that members of the community may feel more comfortable speaking with other community members, as well as a clergyman.

Cox said he tried to gather volunteers from most of the mainstream religions. He enlisted the aid of Father Declan Deane of Saint Monica's Catholic Church in Moraga, Rabbi Roberto Graetz of Temple Isaiah in Lafayette, the Rev. Frank Baldwin of Orinda Community Church and the Rev. Jim Rueb of Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church. Each of the men has been given a pager, ensuring they are reachable at any time.

"This corps may be expanded as different religious needs become known to the fire district," it stated in the overview of the program.

But Deane pointed out that he will counsel anyone in need, not just members of the Catholic faith. "It's not only Catholics who need a helping hand and a warm smile at times," he said.

All the men were enthusiastic about joining the volunteer chaplain program.

See CHAPLAIN, Page 2

## CHAPLAIN

FROM PAGE 1

"Firemen have always been my heroes," Baldwin said. "I was delighted to be able to return a favor — they do so much for the community."

While Graetz admitted that at first he was hesitant because of the possibility of being called at any time of day or night, the thought of helping someone through an emergency changed his mind.

"Offering a prayer when they are facing despair can be helpful," he said.

Baldwin pointed out that participating in the chaplain program is not unlike what he does on a regular basis.

"I'm on-call 24 hours anyway as a pastor," he said. "There are times when our unique role will fit in well."

Cox is instructing the staff about when to use the pagers. He noted that if personnel feel the situation is an immediate emergency, they can page one of the volunteers and punch in 911 — indicating an urgency to the call.

In order to ensure their speed, all the chaplains were also given street maps, district identification cards and business cards, along with the Feder-



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/STAFF

Father Declan Deane of Saint Monica's, left, and the Rev. Frank Baldwin of Orinda Community Church will be among the four volunteers working with Capt. Bob Cox, right, for the new chaplain program.

al Emergency Management Agency's "After the Fire" brochures.

The participants have said that they see their role as one of listening and giving any spiritual comfort that they can.

In addition to offering solace to

local residents in times of need, the chaplains will also be available to the district's personnel during situations when they may need comforting, explained Johnston.

"Firefighters are people, too. If they have any particular situations,

they can see a chaplain," he said.

"Fishing a baby out of a swimming pool or trying to comfort someone who has lost their spouse — there is a tremendous amount of stress for firefighters," said Baldwin.

# Fire board approves budget with surplus

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board adopted the final budget for fiscal year 2000-01 at last week's board meeting.

Revenues for the operating budget for the coming year will exceed expenditures by \$40,436. The budget includes \$239,000 set aside for contingencies.

The final budget incorporated modifications to salaries and wages for members of Local 1230, members of Local 27090, the battalion chiefs, the fire marshal, the administrative assistant and the fire chief.

An expense of \$7,500 for fire station appraisals and \$30,000 for elections had been added to administrative costs, as well.

The actual 1999-00 budget was also updated, indicating that the actual revenues for fiscal 1999-00 exceeded the actual expenditures by a net of \$599,420. The expenditures were under budget largely due to salary savings, discount for prepayment of retirement contributions and applied savings to workers compensation insurance premiums. Additionally, the actual property tax revenues exceed the budget projections by \$324,760.

Also at last Wednesday's meeting, the board approved revisions to the long-range financial plan, as presented by

the finance subcommittee.

The need for revisions arose in July, when bids for the construction of Station 42 returned higher than originally estimated. The construction was bid at a cost of \$258,700 higher than the estimate. At that time, the board requested that the long-range plan be re-evaluated and updated.

The committee returned with several suggestions and made the following modifications:

- Increased the projected replacement cost of the other two fire stations to \$2.5 million each.

- Increased the upgrade costs required at Station 41 and Station 41 administration to \$2.5 million.

- Increased the projected inflation from 3.5 percent to 5 percent per year for facility costs.

- Created a year (2002-03) when no construction would occur and the capital reserve would increase.

- Updated the actual revenues received from 1999-2000.

- Increased property tax projections from 3.75 percent to 4 percent. Actual increases for 1998-99 and 1999-00 were approximately 7.1 percent.

- Updated the apparatus replacement schedule so that a minimum of 15 years of first-line service is achieved for all Type I engines.

- Updated the actual cost for the two Type II engines.

Contra Costa Sun September 27, 2000

Contra Costa Sun 3-7-2001

## Woman praised for saving a life

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

JoAnna Green has always taken to heart the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Two weeks ago, she put that doctrine into action when she saved the life of a 1 1/2-year-old Lamorinda girl, who had been choking on a piece of hard candy at a local store.

"I hope and pray to God that someone would do the same for me and my children," Green said at a recent Moraga-Orinda Fire Board meeting, where she was presented with a certificate of appreciation for being a good Samaritan.

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MORAGA-ORINDA FIRE CHIEF JIM JOHNSTON congratulates JoAnna Greene for her quick-thinking efforts.

KRISTOPHER SKINNER/STAFF

# Moraga-Orinda Fire Department

Invites you to our open house.

October 7th starting with:

7:00-10:00am Pancake breakfast

11:00-12:00 Water Tower demonstration

1:00-2:00pm Auto Extrication demonstration

Other activities include: appearances from Smokey the Bear, Sparky, Squirt, Rescue One. Also demonstrations on fire prevention.

10-7-2000  
Moraga



# Berens, Gottfried vie for seat on fire board

**By Meera Pal**  
STAFF WRITER

Two Orinda neighbors are running for the one available seat on the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board this year.

Eugene Gottfried and Robin Berens are seeking the seat representing Division 5, the area of Orinda north of Highway 24. Current Division 5 board member John Wyro walked onto the board in 1997 because he ran unopposed. Since then, however, he has moved out of the district's borders.

This year marks the district's first board election since its incorporation in 1997, when voters passed the unification by an 80 percent majority. The district is governed by five elected directors in five zones — two in Moraga, two in Orinda, with the other

zone in Orinda, Moraga and Canyon.

Coming into its third year as an integrated district, the board continues to face difficult fiscal and service decisions, as well as striving to create a cohesive district.

Gottfried believes the district has done a good job of creating a cohesive governing body from the two separate districts. "A tremendous effort has been placed on making the services equitable and uniform," he said.

Berens says the public needs to be more aware of the district's actions in order to better understand the available services. He argues that the board needs to make meetings more accessible to the public by meeting in a larger room and alternating between Orinda and Moraga.

**See FIRE, Page 2**

# FIRE

FROM PAGE 1

Gottfried says too many residents believe Moraga's services are superior to Orinda's when, in fact, the district has done a great job of sharing the services and experience of personnel.

Both men say they are determined to govern the district in a fiscally sound manner.

When asked about the administration consisting of six highly paid officials, Gottfried notes that administrative salaries are determined by market forces. "You get what you pay for. We need people who are intelligent, experienced and effective," he says. While Berens was initially concerned about the high salaries, he also notes that the district must be competitive in order to attract top-notch employees.

One of the most important issues facing the district since inception has been the lack of water flow in Orinda. While the Fire Safety Committee — made up of representatives of the East Bay Municipal Utility District, the fire district and the city of Orinda — has been working to address the lack of water pressure, the fire board will need to determine the financial obligations for the committee's suggestions.

Berens says that the majority of the expense should be borne by EBMUD, at 60 percent, because their pipes should have a usefulness of 75 to 100 years. He advocates raising the remainder of the money through a citywide bond.

"Ninety percent of Orinda is a very high fire severity zone, so we have a mutual problem," he says. "A fire in the newer places can come from the older places."

Gottfried agrees that EBMUD should take

## Robin Berens

Age: 72

City: Orinda

Occupation: Retired director, Rover North America

Education: London University, majoring in mechanical, automotive and electrical engineering.

Background: Fire Safe Citizen's Committee; volunteer Bicycle Trail Patrol for East Bay Regional Park District; helped gain



new El Toyonal emergency bridge; coordinator of Upper El Toyonal Neighborhood Watch.

## Gene Gottfried

Age: 71

City: Orinda

Occupation:

Physician/educator, UCSF Department of Laboratory Medicine  
Education: BA and MD, Columbia University; certified in internal medicine and hematology

Background: Treasurer, Rescue One Foundation; member of fire district's Voluntary Emergency Support Team; Orinda



emergency coordinator for RACES/ARES; established Upper El Toyonal Neighborhood Watch.

much more responsibility than they have been willing to, but he believes the remaining amount should be generated through an assessment district because it is a quicker way to levy a tax.

The two candidates also have different opinions on another tax issue — the fire-flow tax. The amount is currently set at different levels for Orinda and Moraga, but the revenue is combined at the district.

Gottfried believes the district has been working hard to create a cohesive district, which has been aided by the revenue generated by the fire-flow tax. He says the perception is that Moraga is better off than Orinda, despite the fact that both areas are in need of facilities renovations.

"There is a balance between Moraga and Orinda. Citizens are much closer than before," he says.

Berens, on the other hand, says the revenue should not be combined. "The accounting was supposed to be kept segregated. I am quite concerned about that," he says.

If elected, Berens' goal is "to maintain excel-

lence of service while at the same time practicing fiscal restraint."

Gottfried says his top priorities will be to improve fire flow, roadways and access for safety personnel as well as reduction of fuel loads. "A collaborative approach is important," he says.

While the two men have similar goals, they say their approaches are different.

"My opponent and I are neighbors. We have been associates for many years. Our concerns are very similar. What we will bring to the board is very different approaches," says Gottfried. "I have spent a lifetime in academics negotiating with doctors, departments, administrators. We put out fires of a different nature."

Berens explains that he will bring a more technical approach to the board, having worked with the technical, as well as the administrative and fiscal aspects of his own company.

"I'm used to having to control expenses in order to pay staff and make a profit," Berens says.

## Berens hopes to expand awareness of fire district

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Newly elected Moraga-Orinda Fire District Director Robin Berens hopes to encourage and improve communication between the district and the public once he takes his seat on the board at the Dec. 20 meeting.

"People don't understand how



Berens

Moraga-Orinda Fire is constructed. They don't understand whom we answer to and what our duties are," Berens says.

He replaces John Wyro, who moved out of Division 5, the area of Orinda north of Highway 24.

Berens won the election with 51.6 percent of the votes, while opponent Eugene Gottfried received 48.3 percent of the votes.

Gottfried did not return phone calls by press time. During his campaign, he vowed to improve fire protection and paramedic services in

Orinda, as well as urging inter-agency collaboration to remedy Orinda's inadequate water distribution.

In a campaign that saw 53 percent of Berens' signs torn down or destroyed, Berens is happy with the outcome. He hopes to take the volunteer position and serve all residents in Division 5, as well as Orinda. He has plans to try to institute a Neighborhood Watch program across the city, similar to the El Toyonal organization that he now heads.

He also wants to hear from the smaller segments of Orinda's neighborhoods.

"I want to have area representatives who will come to an occasional meeting and discuss their concerns," he says.

But his priority will continue to be increasing public awareness about the district. He hopes to eventually move the meetings to a larger venue to accommodate more of the public, and he says he will look into rotating the meetings between Orinda and Moraga.

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board meets at 7 tonight at the Fire Station at 1280 Moraga Way. There will be a special presentation for outgoing Director John Wyro.

Contra Costa Sun 11-15-2000

## Vote Gottfried for M-O fire board

I am writing to ask readers to vote for Eugene Gottfried for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board. As a local attorney, appointed member of a countywide committee and a neighbor who lives between the two candidates, I offer the following observations:

1. Gene Gottfried established the Upper El Toyonal Neighbor Watch Program in 1987. From there, Gene went on to become even more involved in fire and rescue work with the fire district and the city of Orinda.

2. Gene enjoys a fine reputation with government agencies, like the fire board and the city, in addition to the Neighborhood Watch and other community groups, and with his fellow citizens and neighbors. If elected, I believe that Gene, rather than divide or antagonize any segment of the community, will continue to work to bring the community together to reach consensus.

3. By experience and temperament, Gene has the ability to work well with, and to lead, diverse individuals with competing constituents. If Gene is elected, not only will Orinda's voice be heard on the fire board, but Gene will be able to cooperate with other members of the board so that actual concrete goals can be accomplished.

Gene Gottfried has not solicited my endorsement, but I give it to him here, and recommend that your readers vote for him.

Victoria Robinson Smith, Orinda

Contra Costa Sun 10-18-2000

# COMMENT

## Berens is best for M-O Fire Board

North Orinda residents are lucky to have two knowledgeable candidates running for the seat on the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board. Their backgrounds and lists of community involvement are impressive.

Eugene Gottfried has long been an advocate for disaster preparedness and established the Upper El Toyonal Neighborhood Watch program in 1987. That work led to his involvement in emergency communications for the fire district and the city of Orinda. He has also been treasurer of the Rescue One Foundation.

Robin Berens became involved in the El Toyonal Neighborhood Watch during the Oakland Hills Fire and took over as the program's coordinator after Gottfried moved on to communications. Berens also has served on Orinda's Disaster Preparedness Committee and the fire district's Fire Safe Citizens Committee. And in the '80s, he began a 14-year crusade that resulted in the replacement of the aging El Toyonal emergency access bridge.

Both are passionate in their resolve to move forward on the replacement of the inadequate water pipes for fire flow in the El Toyonal area.

However, in individual discussions with the two candidates, one gets the impression that Berens has a stronger head of steam and is willing to push long and hard to achieve a successful solution. Perhaps he will bring the spark needed to bring the years-long discussion into the next phase — construction.

## Berens, Gottfried vie for seat on fire board

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Two Orinda neighbors are running for the one available seat on the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board this year.

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See FIRE, Page 2

## An important EBMUD meeting

It is with deep regret that I must inform all of you that the East Bay Municipal Utilities District staff and officials from the Orinda Fire Safety Committee are unwilling to accept or acknowledge anything more than a minimal contribution to the Orinda water pipe problem.

Over the past several months, representatives from the Orinda City Council, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors and staff have been advancing a very rational and reasonable approach to the problem. Our "community" proposal suggests that a credit amount based on the existing age of the pipes should be applied to the total cost of the pipe replacement.

This concept is based on the fact that under normal age, wear and deterioration, EBMUD would eventually have to replace all of these pipes on its own. Our "community" goal to achieve an upgraded fire flow simply accelerates what would otherwise be the normal replacement of EBMUD pipelines.

As applied, if an existing EBMUD pipe is 75 years old and nearing the end of its useful life, then EBMUD should burden the majority of the replacement cost. Likewise, if a pipe had just recently been installed by EBMUD, then the citizens of Orinda would shoulder most of the cost, since the pipe still had a long useful

See LETTERS, Page 5

Contra Costa Sun 1-3-2001

## LETTERS

FROM PAGE 4

life. This type of business depreciation model makes economic sense and it is fair.

Since it is EBMUD's policy to replace worn-out pipes considering the current fire flow standards of the community, in theory if we were willing to wait long enough, EBMUD would eventually replace all of the pipes that have been a problem here.

Of course, with the threat of wildland/interface fires facing this community, a waiting approach would not be the best strategy.

Several attempts have been made to get the Orinda Fire Safety Committee together to discuss the pros and cons of this proposal, or even to present to the public a position that these three agencies have taken a stand to "agree to disagree." EBMUD has refused to agree to a meeting date for the Orinda Fire Safety Committee.

The EBMUD Board of Directors has, however, set on its Jan. 9 agenda a possible policy adoption that would limit the amount of EBMUD contributions to any pipeline improvements. This is based on a set of findings found in the Rockridge area of Oakland.

Rockridge is not Orinda and the circumstances that are present in this community should be considered on their own merits.

# Fire board considers charge for ambulance services

By Meera Pal

STAFF WRITER

As part of an in-depth staff and budget review, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District will spend \$15,000 to determine revenue available from recouping ambulance costs.

The concept was presented to the board in December by Moraga resident Sherry Hancock, president and CEO of Healthcare Consulting Associates. The fire district approached Hancock because she has 12 years of experience in the development and operations of health-care programs.

Most ambulance services bill patients, who then submit claims to their insurance.

According to Chief Jim Johnston, the Moraga-Orinda district's fees would be based on "a conservative reimbursement plan."

The fire district is considering using any additional revenue for staff expansion. Past analysis has shown that the district can provide a higher level of service and coverage if it were to implement a staffing level of 19 personnel, up from the current 17.

A 19-person model would provide dedicated ambulance staffing at Stations 41 and 45 and adaptive response at Station 44. An adaptive response is when the same personnel who operate the engine also operate the ambulance.

At last Wednesday night's meeting, board directors Pete Wilson and Robin Berens debated the purpose of the study — whether or not they were placing the cart before the horse by conducting a study when a specific staffing model has not been chosen.

Meanwhile, directors Pete Scurr, Gordon Nathan and Ben Ho said it was better to gather all the information about alternative revenue sources to allow the public to make an educated decision.

"We need to gather data and then intelligently inform the public," said Nathan. "We would be remiss if we tell the public that we can't answer their questions."

Orinda resident Betty Murphy also questioned the need for the study, explaining that she has heard many residents say that the fire district spends money as if there were no tomorrow.

Wilson echoed her thoughts and said that he was not in favor of the study.

"We have not entertained the idea or voted in favor of the 19-person staffing level. If we don't endorse that level, then we should not spend this money," he said.

Scurr noted that the district will still look for other revenue

## Fire safety tips for the holidays

*Contra Costa Sun 12-20-2000*

The staff of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District hopes that everyone's thoughts are also on holiday safety during the coming weeks. Here are a few tips to keep your holiday joyous:

- Have operating smoke detectors in your home. It is important to have a detector on each floor and in the hallway leading to the sleeping rooms. If you don't have a detector, residents of the fire district may contact the Fire Prevention Division to receive a free detector and installation.

- If you are using a fresh tree for your decorations, remember to keep it in a water stand and check the water daily. Keep your tree at least 5 feet from heat sources and keep it away from your exit.

- Use lights that are UL (Underwriters Laboratories) listed. Don't

use light strings that are damaged or frayed and use only indoor/outdoor lights outside.

- Unplug decorative lights when you are leaving the house or going to bed.

- Don't run extension cords under carpets, through doorways or near heaters. Be sure cords are not pinched behind or under furniture.

- Keep lighted candles away from other combustible materials and always use a stable candleholder.

- Never leave candles or other open flames unattended.

- If you build a fire in a fireplace, use a fireplace screen. Don't burn the Christmas tree or wrapping paper in a fireplace and never leave young children unattended near fire.

*For more information, call 258-4599.*

## Resident appreciates firefighters

This letter is to express my gratitude and appreciation to our local firefighters.

Between 5 to 6 a.m. on Jan. 16, I detected a strong smell of fire in my bedroom. My fire alarm went off as a result.

Within minutes of my call, our local firefighters arrived. They were very prompt, courteous and professional.

Responsive and responsible workers like those firefighters are hard to find. I want to thank them again.

*1-14-01 CC Sun Suzanne Feinberg, Orinda*

# Ambulance

FROM PAGE 1

sources. "But unless we have this data, we will not be able to make this analysis."

The staff report said: "The data would be very beneficial to the district regardless of the final decision regarding staffing levels. Not only could the district be more proactive in the future (because it truly knows and understands the demographics of the communities), this information could result in the development of a cost recovery program to help defray current expenses."

Healthcare Consulting Associates has access to data that the district needs in order to attain an in-depth analysis: demographic and income information for the community; age, gender, per capita income, unemployment rates; potential medical reimbursement; percentage population insured by Medicare, managed Medicare, Kaiser, commercial and other; percentage of population not covered by insurance; and district specific modeling of demographic information.

"(Hancock) has an excellent knowledge of the data that needs to be collected," said Battalion Chief Rob Goodyear. "I truly believe that she will help us to achieve the end

results."

To minimize the expense of the study, the district staff will support the consultant's efforts by providing call volume by facility; cost of medical supplies used by district personnel; accurate assessment of the kinds and types of medical incidents providing basic life support, advanced life support and trauma stabilization.

Hancock's final assessment is due back in mid-April, with information on advantages/disadvantages of outsourcing; billing options; staffing requirements; capital expenditures; legislative compliance and regulations; and advantages/disadvantages of medical assignment.

Contra Costa Sun

## EBMUD sends pipe plan to subcommittee

Orinda's request to have the East Bay Municipal Utility District increase its share of the cost of upgrading water lines for improved fire flow within the city was met with little action at last week's EBMUD board meeting.

After much comment from city staff and Orinda residents, the board decided to refer the matter to the EBMUD planning committee, headed by board member Katy Foulkes — who represents Orinda.

The pipeline project, estimated at \$13 million, would upgrade water service to 90 percent of the city by replacing 10.8 miles of narrow pipes with larger ones. EBMUD has suggested that the district pay \$1.26 million, which is unacceptable to Orinda.

The EBMUD Planning Committee will meet and discuss Orinda's request at 8 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 13, in the second floor board room, 375 11th St., Oakland. For more information, call EBMUD at (510) 287-0440.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2001

5

Contra Costa Sun

## Orinda water pipe saga continues

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Orinda's attempts to have the East Bay Municipal Utility District replace inadequate water lines and share in the cost of the replacement will be discussed at next month's EBMUD Planning Committee meeting.

At a Moraga-Orinda Fire Board meeting last week, directors discussed the outcome of the Jan. 9 EBMUD meeting, at which a large contingent from the city — including Mayor Amy Worth and city manager Bill Lindsay — asked EBMUD to increase its share in the costs of the upgrades.

"We want to get (EBMUD) to deal fairly and reasonably with us and not be so entrenched with a policy that doesn't apply out here," said Fire Chief Jim Johnston.

At the January meeting, the matter was referred to the EBMUD Planning Committee, headed by EBMUD director Katy Foulkes. She represents Orinda, as well as Moraga and parts of Lafayette, on the EBMUD board.

"I know that this is a great concern and I have been trying to persuade our staff to be generous with Orinda. I have been working very hard to try to persuade the other board members that we

should be more generous with our cost-sharing," Foulkes said in an interview.

EBMUD administrators have said they are willing to pay \$1.26 million of the \$13 million project. That contribution is based on a responsibility and policy to restore Orinda's fireflow to 500 gallons per minute.

Board members have indicated that the bulk of the cost would have to come from Orinda residents.

Board members and staff are concerned that if EBMUD increases its share of Orinda's project, then it would also have to increase the share of other pipeline projects. Orinda is the first city to challenge the EBMUD policy.

Foulkes spoke of an improvement project in Kensington, which was funded using EBMUD's existing policy. EBMUD's chief engineer Marilyn Miller said the city of Kensington created a long-term project with stages to offset the \$5 million tab. The first stage will cost \$400,000.

Prior to the 1991 Oakland Hills firestorm, EBMUD did not share in any pipeline improvement costs.

The proposed Orinda pipeline project would upgrade water ser-

vice to 90 percent of the city and would replace more than 10 miles of narrow piping.

Improvements would provide the fire district at least 1,000 gallons per minute. Most of Orinda's hydrants fall between 500 and 1,000 gallons per minute.

According to Miller, EBMUD has already performed close to \$7 million in water system improvements in Orinda over the past five years, including some pipeline work, building a new storage reservoir and upgrading the water regulators.

"Regulators are a factor in fire-flow," said Miller. "They help water move more effectively through the system."

Orinda-Moraga Fire District staff members, board directors and many Orinda residents plan to attend the Planning Committee meeting.

Depending on EBMUD's decision, the next step for Orinda and the district will be discussed at the next Orinda Fire Safety Committee.

The EBMUD Planning Committee will meet at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 13, at 375 11th St., second floor, Oakland. For more information call, (510) 287-0404.

# Woman praised for saving a life

By Meera Pal

STAFF WRITER

JoAnna Green has always taken to heart the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Two weeks ago, she put that doctrine into action when she saved the life of a 1 1/2-year-old Lamorinda girl, who had been choking on a piece of hard candy at a local store.

"I hope and pray to God that someone would do the same for me and my children," Green said at a recent Moraga-Orinda Fire Board meeting, where she was presented with a certificate of appreciation for being a good Samaritan.

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## TEDDY BEAR PARADE:

February was Teddy Bear Patrol month for seven schools in Contra Costa County, with Lafayette's Springhill Elementary, Happy Valley Elementary and Stanley Intermediate participating in the Heart to Heart Drive by collecting stuffed animals for children in crisis situations.

The Teddy Bear Patrol was founded by a group of Contra Costa women in 1998 to provide stuffed animals to children through local police departments and various social agencies. The patrol has donated more than 1,000 stuffed animals to the Oakland Police Department, as well as other social services organizations, including Shelter, Inc., the Rape Crisis Center and American Medical Response.

When police respond to a situation where a child is upset or injured, the officer has immediate comfort to offer in the form of a stuffed animal.

The Teddy Bear Patrol invites schools, youth organizations and businesses to contact them and participate in a stuffed animal drive. Throughout March, anyone wishing to donate a stuffed animal may drop one off at the Art Room, 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. All stuffed animals donated must be new and should have original tags.

For more information on the Teddy Bear Patrol, call 943-6222, or e-mail [Teddybearpatrol@hotmail.com](mailto:Teddybearpatrol@hotmail.com).



KRISTOPHER SKINNER/STAFF

MORAGA-ORINDA FIRE CHIEF JIM JOHNSTON congratulates JoAnna Greene for her quick-thinking efforts.

## RAY'S OF HOPE

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**MOST HONORED MAN:** Saint Mary's College president Brother Craig Franz presented the college's highest tribute, the award named to honor its founder St. John the Baptist De La Salle, at the school's annual convocation last month. The L'Homme de Foi et de Zele award was presented to educator and scholar Brother Hermano Gines of Caracas, Venezuela, for his extensive contributions to science, sociology and education in his country.

Brother Gines is the founder of 23 educational institutions in Venezuela, including colleges, universities, scientific investigation stations, museums and sociological centers. In addition, he has published more than 60 scientific publications and in 1992 was noted as the Most Admired Man of the Decade by American Biographical, USA.

During his time in Venezuela, Gines was awarded nearly 50 prizes, medals and recognitions of his outstanding contributions to education and discoveries made during some 28 scientific expeditions.

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## SCHOLARSHIP START-UP

**FUNDS:** The Moraga Valley Kiwanis Club donated \$2,000 to the Saint Mary's College women's lacrosse team, in honor of their coach Diane Whipple. The team was shocked in late January by the tragic death of Whipple. The gift will be used to start a women's lacrosse scholarship fund.

About 25 players, with their coaches Sara Miller and Karen Landis, expressed gratitude to club president Ray Horton, contribution chair Walt Barr and to individual Kiwanians. The club received significant revenue from staffing concession booths at Saint Mary's College athletic events.

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**IN HONOR OF A FRIEND:** The 2001 class at Miramonte High School is choosing the bench that will be placed on the senior lawn as a memorial to senior Will Newton, who was killed earlier this year in a car accident. The class is also trying to arrange a benefit dance for all grades in memory of Newton.

\*\*\*

**KNIGHTS IN SHINING ARMOR:** Bryan Inderrieden, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus Lafayette Council, donated \$1,515.10 to Sandra

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District and Saint Mary's College  
cordially invite you to the dedication of the District's  
new 97-foot aerial ladder truck

*The "Spirit of Saint Mary's"*

Please join us, along with members of the Moraga and Orinda communities,  
on March 27, 2001, 10:00 a.m.  
at Station 41 - 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga

Refreshments will be served

RSVP by calling (925) 258-4531 or (925) 258-4525  
before March 22



Welcome to the  
*Spirit of Saint Mary's*  
Dedication

March 27, 2001  
10:00 to 12:00

Greetings and Refreshments

Welcome/Introduction at 10:20

Chief James J. Johnston

Speakers

President Brother Craig  
J. Franz, FDC, Ph.D.

President Peter Scum,  
Board of Moraga-Orinda  
Fire District

Official Dedication and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Social Interaction (Truck Tours given by Engineer/Paramedic Pete  
King)

Contra Costa Sun

# Ambulance plan could boost staff

By Meera Pal

STAFF WRITER

A new study reveals that the Moraga-Orinda Fire District could gain \$520,000 in annual revenue by charging for ambulance transport.

The district could then use that money to expand staffing at the stations.

"If we want to achieve anything above our current staffing level, we would require permanent funding," said Fire Chief Jim Johnston. "The (ambulance billing) mechanism approximates the cost of the additional personnel."

At last week's board meeting, Sherry Hancock and Faye Potts of Alliance for Healthcare Consulting presented a study which identified community demographics, key revenue indicators and administrative options that contributed to possible financial projections. The \$520,000 figure was based on community health care coverage plans, payment characteristics and anticipated levels of compensations.

Currently, the district operates at a 17-minimum staffing level, with five personnel at

Station 41 in Moraga, three at Station 42 in Moraga, three at Station 43 in Orinda, three at Station 44 in Orinda and three at Station 45 in Orinda.

The supplementary revenue of \$520,000 would allow for the addition of two personnel and another dedicated ambulance, both at Station 45 on Orinda Way, Johnston said.

"A 19-minimum daily staffing level translates to two dedicated ambulances, 24 hours a day," he said. "The benefit is that when the two units are transporting, we still have all of our engine companies with their paramedics. The 19-minimum staffing level gives us better service coverage — that's a benefit to both Moraga and Orinda."

The 19-minimum staffing model also provides for a third adaptive response ambulance. "This eliminates the need for a private ambulance to respond in our district. We essentially become self-sufficient as a district," said Johnston.

According to the Moraga-Orinda department's research, the district is one of three in the

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## Ambulance

FROM PAGE 1

state that does not charge for ambulance services. The other two are in Southern California.

"If you collect the money from an insurance company that they've already set aside for payment, then that's another dollar you don't have to take from the taxpayers," said former fire commissioner Dick Olsen of Moraga.

The Alliance study shows that 71.6 percent of the Moraga-Orinda population is covered by an HMO. Most HMOs are obligated to compensate providers of emergency care in the case of true emergencies — ambulance service is expected to be categorized as a "true emergency." Typically, HMO benefits are

covered in full.

To receive payment from the district's MediCal beneficiaries, the fire district would have to apply for a MediCal provider number, thereby accepting the organization's set fee schedule as payment in full. The district would also need to apply to become a Medicare provider and accept its set fee schedule.

The board decided more public outreach and community input was needed before a decision could be made. Only a few residents were in attendance at last week's meeting.

"If we could find a way to make one more attempt to provide a forum for the public so that people can see there is a strategic plan and how it relates to what we're doing," said director Gordon Nathan.

While there has been no extreme negative reaction from

the community, fire district officials would like to ensure that residents are not surprised when a charge for ambulance transport appears on their medical bill.

If the fire board approves the suggestion of billing for ambulance services, Johnston has recommended they first "run a pilot program to see if the results we see on paper will occur, so we do not dedicate to a 19 staffing model without the funding source available."

The Moraga-Orinda Fire Board will conduct a public hearing to discuss the optimal staffing level and its affiliated costs at 7 p.m. May 16 at the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate Auditorium, 1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga. For more information, call 258-4599 or e-mail Chief Jim Johnston at [jjohnston@mofd.org](mailto:jjohnston@mofd.org).

# New fire truck extends district's reach

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

On a sunny but blustery day last week, Moraga-Orinda Fire District paramedic Pete King and firefighter Alan Mathews maneuvered the district's newest firefighting addition around as if they had spent their entire life atop a 97-foot ladder truck.

"The Spirit of Saint Mary's," as the new truck is appropriately named, was made possible with a \$650,000 endowment by the local college.

Because the college is a non-profit institution, they do not pay property taxes — thereby excluding them from paying for fire services.

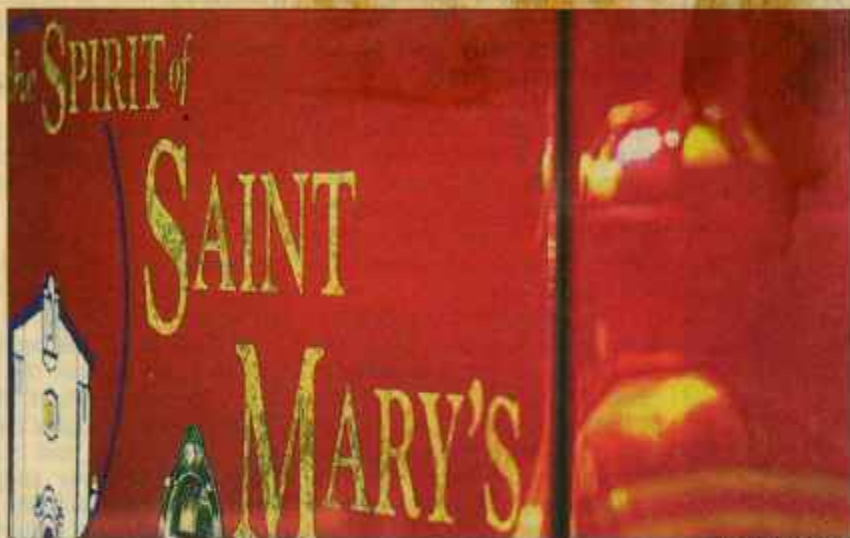
"It was basically a goodwill gesture. We wanted to do something for the community for the (emergency) services that are provided to us," said Clifford Williams, director of media relations at the college.

While the district's older, 75-foot ladder truck was diligently doing its job, Fire Chief Jim Johnston said it was due to be replaced.

"The current truck is nearing 20 years, with 20-year-old engineering. It cannot even reach the fourth floor dorms at the college," said Johnston.

With a 93-foot, mid-mounted ladder and a 4-foot elevating platform, the truck will be able to "affect rescues that we couldn't have thought of," said paramedic Chris Klein.

"The new truck has incredible versatility," said Johnston. "It can easily reach the upper floors of apartment buildings, the Orinda BART platform,



GREG HESS/STAFF

**PARAMEDIC PETE KING'S IMAGE** is reflected in the new fire truck as he prepares to extend the ladder during a training session.

and the new three-story science building at Saint Mary's."

During last week's demonstration, Mathews stepped off the truck and said of his second ride: "It's like riding around in a hot air balloon."

Even when extended at roughly 70 feet, the ladder appears capable of reaching the clouds.

"Primarily, a truck with an aerial device is designed to get people to a safe place," said King.

The process of obtaining the truck began about two years ago. The \$750,000 firefighting machinery was custom-built to the district's speci-

cations, after test-driving a number of other models.

Four to six trucks were tested for their ride, accessibility and aerial devices. Through the evaluation process, the district set their sights on the mid-mount, with an elevated platform.

"If a person needs to be evacuated from an upper floor, they are already scared and coaxing them onto a ladder can be difficult. With a platform, you help the person to step onto a level surface," said King.

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GREG HESS/STAFF

**ALAN MATHEWS, left, and Pete King** survey their surroundings atop the extended ladder.

## Fire

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The cab system is equivalent to the district's existing trucks, including the chassis and the water pump system.

Fourteen months and 200,000 district dollars later, the new truck arrived last week. The district paid \$100,000 toward the truck, while another \$100,000 was spent to equip the truck with medical, firefighting and rescue equipment.

Station 41 on Moraga Way was chosen as the truck's home, due to its proximity to both Orinda and Moraga, as well as easy driving distance to Saint Mary's College.

"This was really a situation where the college could benefit the entire community as well as themselves," said Johnston.

King is supervising and personally training all crew members at Station 41. "We do need to train personnel to safely operate the truck, and we are working quickly," said King. "When you're on the ladder, you're in the third dimension. It's similar to an airplane. You have to pay attention to every position you can imagine."

At 47 feet long, 8 feet, 2 inches wide, 10 feet, 6 inches high and weighing roughly 68,000 pounds, the truck "will greatly enhance (the district's) capabilities," said Johnston.

Or, as Klein joked: "We'll be able to put up Christmas lights like you wouldn't believe."

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District is having an Open House from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. this Saturday at Station 45, 33 Orinda Way in Orinda. The new truck will be on display. The station will also be open to the public, with displays on paramedic equipment, earthquake preparedness, weed abatement and Rescue One Foundation.

Contra Costa

# Generous Donations Put Fire District on Top

■ Nonprofit group's grant allows fire district to purchase life-saving devices

By VALERIE NEVIN  
Assistant Editor

Rescue One Foundation, a nonprofit organization devoted entirely to supporting the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) emergency medical services, recently donated nearly \$21,000 for the purchase of medical monitoring devices for paramedics to use in the field.

"We have five engines and two ambulances and are very fortunate in the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to have a paramedic on every ALS (Advanced Life Support) Engine," explains Nancy Daniels, Continuous Quality Improvement Coordinator for the fire district. "With the Rescue One Foundation's grant, we were able to upgrade all LP-12s with Pulse Oximeters on each first responder."

## New Equipment Can Save Lives

"LP-12s have the capability to track more than the heart rhythm. LP-12s also detect if the heart is not receiving enough oxygen," Daniels adds. Because of the ability to fax this critical information directly to the hospital by modem from the LP-12 attached to the patient, the



CHARLIE JARRETT

Paramedic Daryle Balao explains how to operate the Fire District's new "Life Pak 12" equipment.

emergency room is able to prepare appropriately before the patient's arrival. This is critical time in the case of a blocked coronary artery that is causing muscle damage by oxygen deprivation. "Time is muscle" is what we say. The longer the heart is deprived of oxygen, the greater the damage to the heart," points out Daniels.

The district also purchased two End Tidal CO2 Detectors. This device allows continuous monitoring capability of how well the patient is ventilating. It gives instantaneous and continuous digital monitoring of the patient's carbon dioxide level. With this advanced life support technique, paramedics are able to protect a patient's airway.

"We are able to utilize this technology because of the Rescue One Foundation's generosity. Joseph Barger, Medical Director for Contra Costa County, is very supportive of the use of adjuncts in the paramedic program. Our location is such

that transport time to the emergency room is longer than other areas in the county. This longer transport time affords paramedics more time to manage the patient," elaborates Daniels.

## District Also Receives "Smart" Defibrillators

The last item on the Fire District's wish list that has been fulfilled by Rescue One is an LP-12 AED/ALS Monitor. AED stands for Automated Electric Defibrillator. This is considered a "smart" defibrillator that detects the heart rhythm, diagnoses the rhythm, and then determines if a shock is to be administered. If so, it gives a voice prompt to administer a shock. "These are so effective in saving lives that police are now

using them routinely. The Orinda Police carry AEDs in their patrol cars," explains Daniels.

The American Heart Association is encouraging public access to the Automated Electric Defibrillators. For example, they're installing these devices in public shopping malls. They're already utilized at Chicago's O'Hare Airport with success.

Daniels concludes, "We are grateful to Rescue One for their support. Adjuncts are only as good as the people's training and their ability to use them effectively. To that end, we are continuously looking at our training program and improving our care. We are pleased to have these adjuncts which are considered above the standard of care for paramedics."



SALLY HOGARTY

Saint Mary's College recently donated \$650,000 for the purchase of a new fire truck that greatly enhances the district's fire-fighting capabilities. Christened the "Spirit of Saint Mary's," the truck measures 45 feet, 10 inches in length and 10 feet, 6 inches in height. When fully extended, the ladder platform reaches 93 feet into the sky!



# Comment

## Fire district plan would improve service

By Carl Weber and Dick Olsen

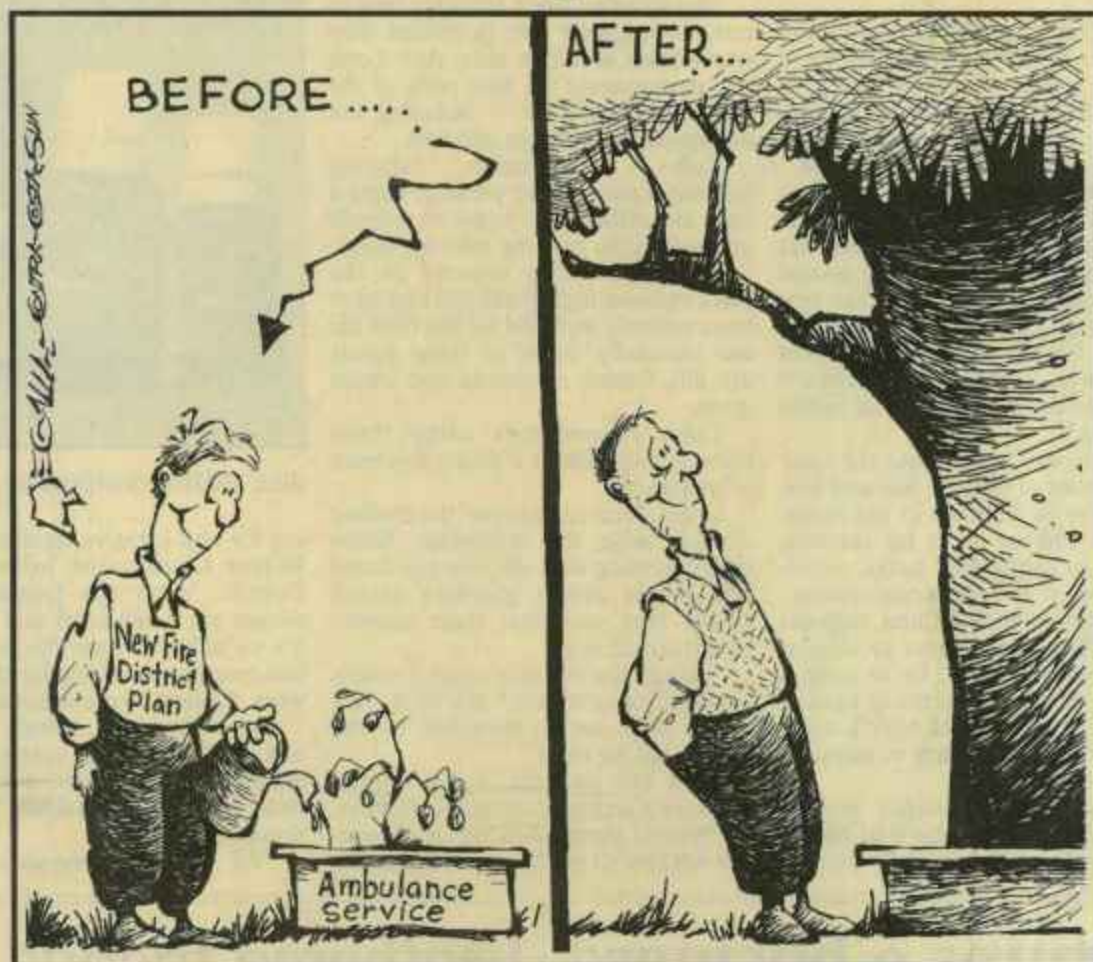
**M**oragans and Orindans will benefit greatly if the fire district's directors approve proposals to: (1) improve ambulance service and response times and (2) bill health insurers for the cost of fire district-provided ambulance transportation.

■ **Background:** The independent Moraga-Orinda Fire District was formed on July 1, 1997, by merging two county-controlled fire districts, after voters in both communities overwhelmingly approved that merger. The new district has attained virtually all the goals proposed by the Moraga-Orinda Fire Study Committee — in less time than projected. Fire district-provided paramedic and ambulance transport services have been initiated in Orinda. Paramedics are now on duty at all five stations. The number of firefighters on duty in Moraga has increased. The recent delivery of a new, Saint Mary's College-funded aerial ladder truck, to be followed this July by two new wildland fire engines, will complete the modernization of the district's firefighting apparatus. The first of three replacement fire stations that meet current seismic safety and other requirements is nearing completion on Moraga Road in Rheem Valley.

■ **The needs:** While much has been accomplished in the last four years, there is a clear need to further improve the district's ambulance service in two respects.

The first, high-priority need is for full-time staffing of the paramedic ambulance based at the

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## Ambulance

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downtown Orinda station. The three personnel currently assigned to that station staff both a paramedic ambulance and a fire engine. When they respond on the engine, there is no paramedic ambulance immediately available in Orinda. When they respond to an ambulance transport call, that station is empty for an hour or more. The district's staff has recommended increasing the number of on-duty personnel at the downtown Orinda station to five. The paramedic ambulance and the fire engine would then each have its own separate, dedicated staff. That same staffing level already exists at the Moraga Way station. The increase would, therefore, result in a more uniform level of service throughout the district.

A second high-priority need is for a third ambulance to serve the district. Calls for emergency ambulance service in both Moraga and Orinda have grown to a point where two near-simultaneous ambulance calls are increasingly frequent. If a third ambulance is currently needed, a private ambulance has to come from Walnut Creek (or farther, if that ambulance is on a call). The district's staff has proposed adding a third ambulance, to be based in the center of the district at the

Orchard Road station.

■ **Financing:** While the need for ambulance service improvements is clear, how to finance them is an open issue. Theoretically, the Fire Flow Tax that voters in both Moraga and Orinda have previously approved might be increased, since the tax is not being assessed at its maximum rate. However, that tax has historically been used primarily for capital needs (i.e. apparatus and equipment purchases and station improvements or replacements), not for operating expenses, like wages and benefits. Moreover, the district's Long-Range Financial Plan contemplates levying that tax only when needed for capital expenditures.

We believe a better alternative would be to bill for ambulance transportation costs and then collect those charges directly from health insurers. According to a consultant employed by the district, every other Northern California fire department that provides ambulance service bills for ambulance transports. That consultant's study also showed that almost every Moragan and Orindan has health coverage (HMO, private insurance, Medicare or Medi-Cal). Those entities have set aside monies on our behalf to pay ambulance service providers, public or private, when we need that service.

We believe the district should collect those monies, just as pri-

vate ambulance providers do, before evaluating a tax increase.

The proposal before the board of directors would set ambulance transport fees at a level that maximizes the dollars collected from insurers while minimizing payments by residents. Most patients should not incur any cost — unless their coverage requires co-payments or a minimum annual deductible. The study also indicates that the money collected, less administrative expenses, would almost fully cover the cost of the ambulance service improvements the district needs. There would, therefore, be no need to consider a tax increase.

We think it all makes sense. If you agree, or even if you don't, you should let the directors know how you feel. You can attend a public hearing at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 16, at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo, or can write to the board at 33 Orinda Way, Orinda CA 94563.

Orindan Carl Weber and Moragan Dick Olsen were the chair and vice Chair, respectively, of the Joint Town of Moraga-City of Orinda Fire Study Committee which prepared the LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) "Application and Master Service Delivery Plan" on behalf of both cities, that led directly to the formation of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

# Firefighters' popularity is in the cards

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Move over Ripken and McGuire, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District has entered the world of trading cards.

Designed to help the community get to know their local firefighting companies, the cards came out of the district's public education committee.

While looking for ways to increase public awareness and build relationships with the community, the committee brainstormed educational programs.

"We knew trading cards were popular with the kids," said fire marshal Tonya Hoover. "And (the cards) are a great opportunity to get the fire department and the face of the firefighters out to the kids and the community."

Due to the cost — \$159 per 2,000 cards — the fire district has to rely on local sponsors for the cards. So far, firefighters Union Local No. 1230 has donated \$500 to sponsor four images.

There are currently five images floating around the district, if you are lucky enough to grab one — the crews at station No. 41 and 42, the engine companies at No. 42 and 43, and truck 241.

"Our goal is that everyone in the station has their bright, shining faces on a trading card," said Hoover.

According to Capt. Randy Kosanke, anytime they have their Class A, blue uniforms on, they carry the cards in their pockets.

While on a lunch run at the Moraga Albertson's last week, the crew from station 41 made sure that they had a sufficient supply of cards on hand. "Typically kids approach us — we do not search them out," said firefighter/paramedic Vince Matulich. "If somebody strikes up a conversation while we're in the store, we'll take the opportunity to hand out the cards."



**MORAGA-ORINDA ENGINEER/PARAMEDIC PETE KING, right, and firefighter/paramedic Vince Matulich give trading cards to Joaquin Moraga sixth-graders Ashley Hall, left, Erin Spradley and Ben Stanley at Albertson's on Thursday.**

That day, Matulich happened upon a special day class from Joaquin Moraga Intermediate. The kids, with their teacher Marie Townsend and teaching assistant Kathy Jordan, were shopping for an upcoming cooking class. Seeing Matulich in his blue uniform, the kids became excited and asked him if he was a police officer.

After explaining that he was with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, Matulich asked the group of kids whether they liked

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## >KNIGHT RIDDER<

### Cards

FROM PAGE 1

trading cards. Unanimously and enthusiastically, the answer was "Yes!"

"We talk about firemen and policemen in the classroom all the time," Jordan said as she watched the kids compare the trading cards they had received. "But to have a fireman come up to them is just great. We go out in the community quite a bit and if they need help, they need to know whom they can trust and talk to."

Hoover is planning to produce cards with action shots — such as a crew fighting a fire — along with the district's equipment. For local business sponsors, she says they can park the truck in front of the store and take a photo.

Eventually, there will also be

a "limited edition" Fire Chief Jim Johnston card. It will be as rare and treasured as a gold Pokemon card.

When Hoover received her first cards, she went around to the stations and had the crew members sign them — to

increase their value.

Who knows ... in 10 years, the Station #41 trading card may put Junior through college.

For more information on sponsoring a trading card, call Tonya Hoover at 258-4525.

A publication of the Contra Costa Times

# Orinda may be on its own for pipe replacement

By Meera Pal

STAFF WRITER

Prospects do not look good for Orinda's attempts to have the East Bay Municipal Utility District share in the cost of replacing the city's water pipes.

At last Tuesday's meeting of the EBMUD Planning Committee, two of the three committee members indicated that they were inclined to deny Orinda's request and maintain the district's policy on replacing water pipes.

"Given what we heard at the meeting, I'm not terribly optimistic," said Orinda Mayor Amy Worth.

At the end of the committee meeting, Katy Foulkes, Orinda's EBMUD representative, requested that the planning committee continue the discussion in March with additional information from district staff, as well as Orinda.

"We should be able to look beyond our policy — I hope we can be flexible," said Foulkes.

In the meantime, Worth said Orinda must work toward exploring other funding options.

Due to aging and small pipes, a majority of Orinda's hydrants are below the recommended firefighting flow.

"This is really an urgent matter for Orinda, and in the next couple of months we will be formulating other alternatives," Worth said.

Upgrades to pipelines that do not meet current goals for service or fire flow have been addressed by Policy Recommendation No. 4 from EBMUD's Infrastructure Policy Study of 1994.

The IPS found that 14 percent of the district's service area has fire flows below the minimum 1,000 gallons per minute (gpm), which is the typical fire flow goal for fire agencies. The cost to upgrade was estimated at \$800 million.

"This expenditure would affect only a small portion of EBMUD's customers," said Marilyn Miller, director of engineering and construction.

However, Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Jim Johnston said that the \$800 million "fails to look at the significant contribution from the Orinda community ... or the benefit given back to the water district with the new pipes."

Orinda resident Pat Dunn added, "Eighty-six percent of your district has 1,000 gpm, while 14 percent does not — is that equitable?"

Given the large cost of upgrading, the

board decided to address the issue in two ways:

- When pipelines are replaced for maintenance reasons, the new pipelines will provide the desired fire flows, as established by local agencies.

- When local communities wish to accelerate the process, the district will work with them on joint funding.

"The age of a pipe is not a determinant. We have old pipes that perform very well," said Miller.

She also noted that because local com-

See PIPES, Page 2

## Pipes

FROM PAGE 1

munities have varying fire flow standards, it is difficult to maintain all fire flow goals.

For example, Rockridge has a goal of 1,500 gpm, while Kensington has a goal of 4,500 gpm.

"Industry practice is not to change pipes as fire flow goals change," said Miller.

She contends that Orinda approved the layout, size and cost of the 126,000 feet of pipeline that was laid out between 1933 and 1958.

Orinda resident Sarge Littlehale responded that the Orinda community has drastically changed since 1933 — when there were 26 students in kindergarten through eighth grade and the population

was about 1,000, with a total of 507 homes.

He also noted that Orinda is different from other communities within the EBMUD district because it has been designated a very high fire severity zone.

Orinda City Councilwoman Joyce Hawkins pointed out that there are a number of benefits for EBMUD by upgrading Orinda's pipelines.

"The reduced fire risk is a benefit for Orinda and other communities in your district," she said. "And there is a need to protect the asset you have in our community — the water treatment plant."

However, EBMUD general manager Dennis Diemer noted that "just because we have 11 miles of new pipe doesn't mean we're going to have 11 miles of trouble-free pipes."

"I see this as a community problem," added EBMUD director

Doug Linne. "EBMUD needs to be involved, but it is still a city responsibility to deal with it. I don't hold out hope that there is going to be a significant change in our position — I wouldn't hold out for that. I don't want (EBMUD) to be an impediment to getting this done."

Foulkes was elected president of the EBMUD board of directors last week, so she said she will no longer be on the Planning Committee.

She said the change may not be a bad thing as far as Orinda is concerned. "It gives the opportunity to educate some other board members," she said.

*The East Bay Municipal Utility District's Planning Committee will meet at 8 a.m. March 13, 375 11th Street, second floor, Oakland. For more information, call (510) 287-0404.*

# Fire district to charge fees for ambulances

By Meera Pal

STAFF WRITER

Later this year, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District will begin a test program for ambulance billing and cost recovery, to determine whether sufficient funding is available to support a 19-person minimum staffing model.

"This has been a very long process for us," Fire Chief Jim Johnston said at last Wednesday's board meeting. "We have spent a considerable amount of time moving forward on the strategic plan. Whatever service level we choose, we need to have a funding mechanism in place."

In January, Moraga-based Alliance Healthcare Consulting was hired to conduct a demographic and health insurance study for the district, to determine the potential revenue available from billing and cost recovery for ambulance transportation. The net annual revenue, based on conservative numbers, was estimated at \$521,029.

While the board approved the test program for up to 12 months, there was concern at last week's meeting about adopting a 19-person staffing model without definitive numbers.

"I don't want to approve a 19-person staffing before revenue is confirmed. We can't adequately project the revenues over the next five years, while we can on the expense side," said board director Pete Wilson.

The staff's recommendation was divided into two, and only implementation of the test billing program was adopted.

"We should immediately begin the study to determine whether it will support a 19-person staffing model," said Wilson.

Director Robin Berens suggested extending the time of the test program from the suggested six months to a year, after Wilson expressed doubt that six months would be an adequate amount of time for gathering data.

While speaking in favor of the 19-person staffing model, as well as the billing program, other directors agreed with Wilson's reasoning.

"We need to position ourselves to continue the excellent service that residents have enjoyed for years," said director Ben Ho.

The estimated timeline is:

- June: The district will develop its plan for outsourcing billing agencies.

- July: Begin interviewing agencies.

- August: Award the billing contract.

- October: Begin the test program.

Members of the public expressed their support for both the billing and staffing plans.

"If you can save one life with this service, then you should try it," said Moraga resident Dave Long.

One resident shared an experience during which she was rushed to Station 41 by her husband and was treated by the crew, then transported to the hospital. "I was shocked that I didn't get a bill for their service," said Orinda resident

See AMBULANCE, Page 2

INFORMATION FOR LIFE

## Ambulance

FROM PAGE 1

Carolyn Yancey. "I thought, as a taxpayer, I didn't deserve this service for free."

In January 1999, the fire board adopted a five-year strategic plan, which laid out the blueprint and provided a foundation to building the district. The most important aspect was the mission statement: "With pride and

professionalism, the Moraga-Orinda Fire Protection District will provide the highest level of emergency and public service in response to the needs of our community."

The district has proceeded over the past two years with the collection of data, evaluation and presentations to the board, in order to further the strategic plan. In 2000, the emphasis was placed on comparing daily staffing models, ranging from 15 to 19. The effect on response

time, emergency operations, risk potential and district coverage was evaluated.

The district currently operates on a 17-minimum staffing. The 19-person model — recommended by staff — would include two dedicated ambulances, one at Station 41 on Moraga Way in Moraga and the other at Station 45 on Orinda Way in Orinda. A third ambulance would be centrally located within the district at Station 44 on Orchard Road in Orinda.

5-23-2001  
Contra Costa Sun

# Town getting trim for fire break

■ Inmate work crews will begin cutting brush and vegetation in Moraga next month

By Andy Jokelson  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — Supervised inmates from a minimum-security camp will remove dead and dying vegetation and trim trees on town-owned property along hilly Donald Drive this summer to minimize fire fuel, say public officials.

"We'll thin out the vegetation in that area. We'll trim the trees up. We'll take out the dead debris, the trees that have fallen, as well as removing highly flammable coyote brush," said Tonya Hoover, fire marshal of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

The project will create a shaded fuel break of up to about 30 feet wide along an approximately 400-foot-long stretch of Donald between Laird Drive and an uphill gate across the road, Hoover said.

The inmates will later prune trees on a fire department access

road beyond the gate.

"It would greatly reduce the ability of (a) fire to move up that hill. It won't have the fuel ... and if it would move up the hill, we've removed the (above-ground) fuels so it stays a ground fire, instead of moving up the trees," Hoover said.

Trees will be pruned as high as 6 feet above the ground, she said.

"The residents of the area have been concerned with the vegetation along that road," said Town Manager Karen Stein.

The property was part of about 250 acres on Mulholland Ridge that the city obtained from a developer's donation.

The inmates will come from the Delta Conservation Camp, run by the state Department of Corrections and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in Solano County.

"It was a cost-effective way to get a lot of work done on town property. And the bottom line is getting it done for fire safety," Hoover said.

Hoover estimated the cumulative cost to the city and district at perhaps \$2,000.

Inmates from the camp handled a similar cleanup behind the Orinda Community Center in 1999. The camp, near Fairfield, provides trained crews that have done extensive fire prevention, trail maintenance, firefighting and other work at numerous sites, including Mt. Diablo State Park.

Crew members are screened and get one day reduced from their sentences for each day serving on a work crew, according to state officials. They are not considered escape risks, and most are serving sentences for drug-related offenses.

"They're darn good workers. ... They're quite effective at what they do as a team," said Capt. Matthew Lee of the CDF.

Hoover said she expects the inmates to start the project during the week of July 30 or Aug. 6. They can probably do most of the work within a week, she said.

"If they need to add a couple days to get the project done, then they'll do that," she said.

The inmates will cut up removed trees and limbs into small pieces for firewood available to the public and will blow wood

chips back onto the ground to suppress growth of weeds and grass, she said.

Meanwhile, the fire district will urge owners of parcels on a handful of Orinda streets north of Highway 24 to clear vegetation from their properties for about 3 feet from the road and about 15 feet above it, Hoover said.

"Most of this will be pruning," she said. The aim is to improve access and decrease response time for medical, fire or other emergencies and minimize damage to emergency vehicles, she said.

Hoover said she will send letters to homeowners emphasizing "the importance of doing this and how it benefits them."

The fire district would cut up the prunings with a chipper and residents could use the chips as ground cover, she said.

She expects work to begin Aug. 4 and 5, before the height of the fire season, on two streets in the hilly El Toyonal neighborhood as a demonstration project that could expand to operate one or two Saturdays a month, beginning in April.

# Plan aims to minimize Mulholland fire danger

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

With proper mitigation and enforcement, the Mulholland Ridge open space will be a safe place for the public, according to the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and Moraga police.

At a meeting Monday, fire marshal Tonya Hoover spoke to the Mulholland Ridge committee about her concerns with the 250-acre property. She said her issues with vegetation and abatement are being addressed by the town.

The town has already started clearing the over-growth of vegetation along Donald Drive, which helps tremendously, as far as the fire district is concerned.

In partnership with the town, the fire district is looking at working with the California Department of Forestry to have excessive dead and dying ground cover chipped and blown back onto the ground. This keeps the seasonal growth down, Hoover explained.

The fire marshal is in the process of completing the CFD, which should take about two weeks for the forestry department to process. But once the work begins, it will be completed in roughly three weeks.

"This is a very large piece of property, so we look to the town to help us make it safe," Hoover said. "Whenever you use any open space you increase the risks — you just need to mitigate those risks."

Once the abatement work is complete, she estimates that the area will be relatively safe for the next three to four years, with proper maintenance.

Hoover also emphasized the district's requirement for 30-ft. fire breaks along property lines, as well as on a ridge.

"We want to stop anything from running up or down the hill," she said.

To the area residents, she emphasized the importance of maintaining a defensible space around the perimeter of a home, by trimming vegetation, and the importance of clearly marking the address to ensure that emergency crews can locate the residence.

**"Whenever you use any open space you increase the risks — you just need to mitigate those risks."**

— Tonya Hoover, fire marshal

Lt. Russ Thomas from the town's Police Department also spoke about their view of the area.

"We don't see doing much more than at other parks in Moraga," Thomas said of the Mulholland area. "Why restrict an open space and become an oppressive force when we don't have to be?"

Currently, the police drive through Rancho Laguna and the Commons Park at least two to three times a day, he said.

In reference to the parking issues that were raised by a number of residents, Thomas suggested that proper signage and enforcement were the answer.

His suggestions for regulations included opening the area at dawn and closing at dusk, similar to the town's other recreation areas, and only allowing dogs off-leash in specific, posted areas.

Committee member Quintin McMahon asked Thomas if the town has experienced a serious problem with individuals partying or loitering in the area.

Thomas said that in the past five years, there have been two sets of people who tried to take up residence up there, but other than that, there had been no major problems.

The committee did not make any recommendations regarding regulations for the open space and will come back to the subject at their next meeting.

The committee will also discuss trails and access to the Mulholland Ridge at that meeting.

*The Mulholland Ridge Committee will meet at 7:30 p.m. July 16 at the Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Dr.*

# Fire board reviews budget, fire flow tax, facility needs

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Preliminary estimates indicate that the Moraga-Orinda Fire District will end the 2000-01 fiscal year with a \$402,158 surplus.

While the district's estimated expenditures will be equal to the budgeted amount approved last year, actual revenues for the fiscal year, at \$10,091,086, are significantly higher than those projected, at \$9,688,928. This is due to a conservative estimate on property tax revenue, said fire Chief Jim Johnston.

At last week's meeting, the board approved the preliminary operating and capital budgets for the 2001-02 fiscal year. Revenues are projected to be \$10,771,071, with recommended expenditures totaling \$10,414,147.

The district has attempted to keep expenses as low as possible, given the need to include significant increases in existing programs, as well as funding for new programs, such as career development.

The more significant budgetary items include:

- A \$113,000 increase in Workers Compensation premiums.

- A \$60,000 JPA assessment.

- A \$65,600 increase in additional fuel, electricity and garage costs.

- A \$39,750 increase in career development and a promotional testing plan.

Johnston noted that the significant increase in Workers Comp premiums is due to the number of injuries that have occurred on the job over the past few years.

The 2001-02 capital budget also includes necessary funding for: apparatus (new Type IIIs, a replacement and new ambulance, and a command vehicle for the fire marshal); facilities (new exhaust removal systems for the stations); Station #44 construction planning; and miscellaneous items such as a new telephone system.

The board must adopt the preliminary budget before the beginning of the new fiscal year on July 1. The final adoption of the budget, along with the establishment of spending limits, will occur in September.

## Five-cent fire flow tax

Last week, the board also approved a fire flow tax of five cents, the same as last year, for

fiscal year 2001-02. The tax must be established by the board and levied against each parcel by August.

Last year, the fire flow tax yielded roughly \$422,000 net in Orinda and roughly \$427,000 net in Moraga. There are 5,924 taxable parcels in Orinda and 6,460 in Moraga.

Johnston said that, in accordance with the district's long-range financial plan, the fire flow tax will remain at five cents until the year 2008, at which point it is projected to be eliminated.

## Upgrades for Station #44

Also at last week's meeting, a Request for Proposal to hire a project manager for the design and construction of Fire Station #44 on Orchard Way in Orinda was approved.

According to the district's five-year strategic plan and long-range financial plan, the Orchard Road station is the next for re-construction, following Station #42.

The cost for a project manager is assumed to be similar to the contracted agreement for Station #42 in Moraga, which was an amount not to exceed \$125,040.

Based on the construction cost of Station #42, a preliminary total cost of \$2,748,100, with a 5 percent yearly inflationary rate, has been included in the long-range financial plan.

Station #44, which is located on a 1-7 acre site, was constructed in 1952. Based on a 1996 seismic study and property physical condition report by Dewell and Associates, there were a number of seismic issues, including architectural, mechanical and electrical building code deficiencies; Americans with Disabilities Act compliance; and energy conservation.

The project manager will establish a design team with a project architect, district staff, district facilities committee members and associates professional support services, along with providing day-to-day coordination.

The district would like the project manager to be hired in July 2001, with the design completed in June 2002 and the construction completed in September 2003.

*The fire district board meets at 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 18, at Fire Station #41, Moraga Way.*

6-27-2001 Contra Costa Sun

Welcome to the  
New Station 42  
Dedication

July 28, 2001  
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Greetings and Refreshments

Welcome/ Introduction

Chief James J. Johnston

Speakers

Supervisor Sayle B. Wilkema  
Contra Costa County Board of  
Supervisors, District 2

Mayor William Vaughn  
Town of Moraga

Gordon Nathan  
Moraga-Orinda Fire District  
Board of Directors

Official Dedication and  
Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Chief James J. Johnston

Open House to follow

# Moraga-Orinda Fire welcomes a new station

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

After 44 years of service, Moraga-Orinda Fire Station 42 on Rheem Boulevard will be officially retired from its post this Saturday, when the new Moraga Road fire station is inducted into the district.

In 1998, a report concluded that the Rheem Boulevard station was too small for expansion and upgrades in accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, air quality, seismic retrofitting and other requirements. One of the major problems listed was the lack of ventilation at Station 42.

After surveying available sites, the district purchased the current 1.7-acre lot on Moraga Road for \$475,000.

"In this day and age, when you build a fire station, you have to build it to withstand an 8.0 earthquake," said fire chief Jim Johnston.

Two years after starting the reconstruction project, the new Station 42 is complete, with all the bells and whistles.

Features include above-ground fuel storage, to avoid any possible fuel leaks, a state-of-the-art exhaust system, two decontamination areas and separate bedrooms for each firefighter on duty. The bedrooms are shared by firefighters on alternating shifts.

Johnston also noted that the new facility is one-story, eliminating the need for crew to slide down a pole — which has the potential for injury.

"We're very conscious of environmental hazards — this is more than just a house with



BATTALION CHIEF GREG HOLM surveys the grounds of the new fire station on Moraga Road last Friday afternoon. GREG HESS/STAFF

## FIRE STATION DEDICATION

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District is holding a dedication ceremony and open house for the new Fire Station 42, 11 a.m.- 2 p.m., Saturday, July 28. Light refreshments will be provided.

The dedication ceremony, with speeches from the fire chief, county supervisor and others, will begin at 11 a.m.

From noon-2 p.m. the public will be invited to take a tour of the new facility.

Station No. 42 is located at 555 Moraga Road, Moraga.

a garage," said Johnston.

Other safety aspects include a drive-through engine bay, which eliminates the need for crew to stand in the middle of

the street when a truck is backing in or out.

Before the new station was built, a questionnaire was sent to every crew in the district,

asking them what should be included.

"Everything in its location has been planned to maximize the efficiency of the station for the crews," said Johnston.

Development and construction of the station came in \$80,000 below budget, according to Johnston, who is very pleased with the outcome.

"It's more than just a functional facility — it fits into the design concepts of the town," he said. "All in all, it will be a much safer and efficient station to serve the community."

**The Moraga-Orinda Fire District  
cordially invites you to attend the dedication and open house for**

## **New Station 42**

**555 Moraga Road, Moraga  
Saturday, July 28, 2001**

**Dedication ceremonies begin at 11:00 a.m. with an open house  
from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.**

Light refreshments will be provided



SUSAN POLLARD/TIMES

**READYING STATION 42** on Friday for today's opening are firefighter Randy Ciampi, center, and reserves Adam Thornton, left, and Tim Bender. The station replaces the old one on Rheem Boulevard.

## New fire station opens today on Moraga Road

By Dogen Hannah  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

**MORAGA** — The Moraga-Orinda Fire District today plans to celebrate the opening of a fire station, capping a week in which the district advanced two other major projects.

The 6,800-square-foot Station 42 at 555 Moraga Road replaces a smaller station at 331 Rheem Blvd. that is about 40 years old. The new firehouse is built to withstand a major earthquake, unlike the old station, and is far more functional, district Chief Jim Johnston said.

Station 42, which cost \$2.4 million, is the first of three the district plans to rebuild entirely. The station — and two others to be remodeled — will meet more rigorous seismic standards as well as current health and safety codes, Johnston said.

The district board Thursday selected Aztec Consultants of San Ramon to manage the rebuilding of Station 44 at 295 Orchard Road, Orinda. The \$2 million project is scheduled to start about July 2002.

The district has a hard time fitting modern, larger firetrucks into the five-decade-old Station 44, district President Pete Wilson said. There also is no room for a spare ambulance the district

probably will put in a new, larger station, he said.

"The station is way outdated for our needs," Wilson said.

The district also plans to rebuild Station 43 at 20 Via Los Cruces, Orinda. It plans to remodel Station 41 at 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, and Station 45 at 33 Orinda Way, Orinda.

Work on all five stations is scheduled to be done by 2008 at an estimated cost of \$12 million. The district has received federal and state grants of about \$225,000 and \$30,000, respectively. A parcel tax is funding the balance.

Also this week, a committee of district and Orinda officials scheduled a series of public meetings to craft a plan — to be put to Orinda voters as early as March — for upgrading the community's water lines and expanding efforts to reduce fire dangers of trees and weeds.

The estimated \$12.8 million water line project includes replacing 10.8 miles of pipes with larger ones to provide at least 1,000 gallons of water a minute per hydrant from any three adjacent hydrants open simultaneously.

The district also wants to add a full-time staffer at a cost of about \$80,000 annually to boost efforts to remove dead or dying vegetation from neighborhoods.

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 1, 2001

Contra Costa Sun

## Orinda group tests the waters

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Orindans will be faced with a ballot measure in March 2002, asking them to support a funding method to finance a \$13 million water pipe upgrade project.

After months of standstill negotiations with the East Bay Municipal Utilities District, the Orinda Fire Safety Committee has decided it is up to Orinda residents to come up with a funding solution.

EBMUD has maintained that changing the water pipes for fire flow reasons is a community matter. Orinda's 75-year-old pipes have 25 years to go before scheduled replacement. When pipes are replaced for maintenance reasons, EBMUD officials have said the new pipes will provide the desired fire flow. Currently, EBMUD has agreed to contribute \$1.26 million toward the project.

The proposed project would upgrade water service to 90 percent of Orinda by replacing 10.8 miles of narrow pipes with larger ones to provide 1,000 gallons of water per minute per hydrant from three hydrants. Most of

the fire hydrants in the city fall short of 500 g.p.m.

At a Fire Safety meeting last week, residents and committee members spoke about their concern that there has been far too much talking and not enough action to address the potential of inadequate firefighting flows.

"We really did exhaust all possibility with EBMUD and I think the community needs to understand that we tried to be their advocate," said Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Jim Johnston.

The fire district is concerned with vegetation management in the city, in addition to the water supply issue, Johnston added.

Committee members were in agreement that action should be taken to improve the water flow. Many felt that negotiations with or possible litigation against EBMUD should be explored simultaneously.

City manager Bill Lindsay explained a \$13 million project would require roughly a \$195 a year tax for 25 years.

Some members of the public did not like the idea of taxing the entire city, when not all hydrants

See FIRE, Page 2

## Fire

FROM PAGE 1

in Orinda need upgrading. Orinda resident Clyde Vaughn advocated forming assessment districts in individual neighborhoods.

Others spoke of the addition of a vegetation management program in the \$13 million project, in order to garner support from neighborhoods that have adequate water flow.

Johnston agreed: "If we don't take care of the vegetation it doesn't matter if you have 2,000 or 3,000 g.p.m."

He explained that the pro-

posed project would include an aggressive fuel management program.

Committee member and M-O fire district board member Pete Wilson pointed out that the fire district has had a vegetation management program in place for a number of years, headed by fire marshal Tonya Hoover.

Every year, Hoover conducts weed abatement on the existing properties in Orinda and Moraga, looking for adequate defensible space between a residence and surrounding vegetation.

To get the committee moving, Wilson proposed more organization within the group, including setting meeting dates, adopting a game plan and providing public education. He also

suggested that members of the public come together and form an election committee.

The committee needs a governmental body to place the measure on the ballot for March 5, 2002. They will seek approval from the M-O fire board and Orinda City Council.

The Orinda Fire Safety Committee will meet at 7 p.m. Aug. 9 to discuss the scope of work needed to improve the city's water pipe system; 7 p.m. Aug. 30 to discuss and adopt a funding method; and 7 p.m. Sept. 20 to discuss the wording of the ballot measure. The committee meets at the Orinda Community Center, 26 Orinda Way.

# Graduation ends academy training for 14 new firefighters

■ The men will team up with veterans at the San Ramon Valley and Moraga-Orinda districts

By Linda Davis  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SAN RAMON — They fought practice fires, wrestled with hoses and ladders, and crawled through smoky labyrinths in pitch darkness.

They pried cars open with the Jaws of Life and went through their paces in the heat wearing 40 pounds of clothing and gear.

After nine weeks of intensive training, 14 new recruits received their badges Friday, making them full-fledged firefighters. Nine of them will join the San Ramon Valley Fire District, and five will go to work for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. The districts combined resources to stage this academy.

Wives, proud grandparents, giggling babies and numerous fire officials filled the auditorium of the PG&E Learning Center for the official ceremony, which included good-natured hooting from family and friends of the rookies.

Recruit Steve Avery's brother, fire engineer Mike Avery, was there to cheer on his 28-year-old sibling who was a firefighter-paramedic in Pacifica for a year before getting hired at San Ramon.

Steve Avery took fire science classes and emergency medical training and patiently waited for his shot at working for the district.

"I always wanted to be over here," Steve Avery said. "I've been working toward it for about eight years."

Ben Wylie, 25, was a firefighter-paramedic in Arnold for about a year and was previously a paramedic for an ambulance company out of Sacramento. His father, who pinned the badge on his son Friday, is retired from the San Ramon Valley Fire District.

All the new recruits had to be paramedics before they were hired, said training supervisor Capt. Steve Cochran. The 14 men are from their mid-20s to late 30s. Some came from firefighting with another department; others had worked for ambulance companies or were volunteer firefighters.

Once through the application process, the rookies were sub-

jected to strenuous training. They had to pass an agility test, then submit to oral interviews before a panel. Recruits also passed a lie detector test, background check and physical checkup. The final candidates were then interviewed by the chiefs.

The 14 men experienced every phase of fire service in this intermediate academy, Cochran said. All had been through basic fire training before they were hired.

They were schooled in dealing with hazardous materials, wildland fires and structure fires, were tested with hoses, ladders and the Jaws of Life and did other exercises. Rookies have the most trouble with ladders, Cochran said.

"They're bulky and heavy, and you don't use them every day," Cochran said.

"Throwing ladders, you get real sore," Avery said. "Especially your shoulders."

Avery worked out nearly every day to get in shape for the demanding training.

The "confidence course" was a bugaboo for others. The recruits had to crawl through a pitch black maze full of narrow corridors, portholes and dead



DOUG DURAN/TIMES

AT THE ACADEMY for the San Ramon Valley and Moraga-Orinda fire districts, students pull another firefighter from a truck.

ends, outfitted in full gear with masks.

This was to simulate crawling through a burning building in which heavy smoke impairs visibility.

San Ramon Fire Chief Rick Probert said his new hires will still be learning during their 18-month probation period. They will be teamed with experienced firefighters and continue their

training, and most of them are expected to make the grade.

Probert said today's firefighters must be computer-literate, and most are college-educated.

Equipment and procedures are far more sophisticated today than when Probert joined the department 27 years ago.

"Today is a big deal for them and the department," Probert



DOUG DURAN/TIMES

RICH WYLIE, a retired San Ramon firefighter, pins a badge on his son, Ben Wylie, during the graduation Friday.

## CLASS OF 2001

San Ramon Valley Fire District

Steve Avery, Shane Bennett, Sean Grayson, Kyle Carlson, Jim Weston, John Youngblood, Clinton Pruett, David Maochi, Ben Wylie

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Gregory Kurtz, Anthony J. Perry, Matthew Epperson, Ziad Doumani, Dan Johansen

said of Friday's ceremony. "We will train them well. I want them to all have satisfying careers."

Reach Linda Davis at 925-773-2218 or ldavis@cctimes.com.

# Orinda continues to ferret funding options for more water flow

By Paula King  
STAFF WRITER

At Orinda's last Fire Safety Committee meeting, the group discussed several funding options for improvements to the water system.

According to City Manager Bill Lindsay, the options can be combined to reach an adequate funding level. At a prior meeting, the committee supported a project that would upgrade water service to a minimum of 1,000 gallons per minute from one hydrant for 90 percent of the city's fire hydrants.

No decision was made however, due to a lack of City Council representation.

In his presentation, Lindsay spoke

of the advantages and disadvantages of debt financing in comparison to pay-as-you-go options.

"The merits of pay-as-you-go are there are no interest charges and they have a shorter sunset. But, the disadvantage is that the current property owners pay for long-term projects, which brings up equity issues," said Lindsay. "The advantages of debt financing are that you get the money for capital improvements up front, current and future property owners pay for water system improvements, the work gets done faster and you mitigate inflation risks. The disadvantage is that you incur interest charges and it needs to be collected over a long time

period."

Several of these options were used throughout the Bay Area for similar fire safety and water system improvements.

General obligation bonds were used to fund the city of Oakland's portion of the funding for the Rockridge Assessment District and the city of Berkeley's city-wide fire safety improvements. Also, a special parcel tax was utilized to fund the Marin Water District's water system improvements.

General obligation bonds are voter approved long-term debt instruments that could be issued by the city of Orinda or the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. They are collected with prop-

erty taxes, in this case for an extended time period of 20 to 30 years.

Assessment districts are often used to finance improvements to infrastructure and they can be used to fund both debt service and pay-as-you go project improvements through the annual collection of property taxes. Although the legal process can be involved, Lindsay says it could help to inform property owners of the proposed program.

Special parcel taxes are like the fire district's existing fire flow tax.

Utility charges may be established on a flat fee per customer basis, or on a consumption basis to be collected with residential water bills. Lindsay said this is the most common method for capital

expenditures.

Utility taxes are structured as a percentage surcharge beyond the standard water rates and the water utility tax would also be collected with monthly water bills.

Some Orinda residents in attendance wanted to see more specific information relating to how the adoption of each funding option would directly impact residents individually.

"I want to know what it is going to cost me. We need information on what it will cost individuals," said resident Dan Murphy. "It's fundamental. Costs for each of these alternatives need to be provided to residents with a broad evaluation of those costs."

### Tribute to fire district employee

It is with great sorrow that I am writing this note to inform you of the death of Andi Freeman, a valued employee of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District for over 20 years. Andi passed away last night (Oct. 4) after a courageous battle with cancer. Indicative of Andi, she refused to go until Barry Bonds had hit Home

*Contra Costa Sun 10-10-2001*

#### Run No. 70.

Her family has notified us that services will be private and for immediate family only. However, in keeping with Andi's wishes a party to celebrate her life and legacy will be scheduled in the near future.

Dave appreciates all of the thoughts, prayers, blood donations, and other indications of support that have been given to Andi and the family. She loved everyone and everyone loved her.

Andi joined the Moraga Fire Department in March 1981. Through the years, she held a variety of positions, bringing her enthusiasm and her love of life to each new assignment. Andi has left behind a beautiful legacy — one of family, friends, love, compassion for others and an incredible sense of humor. She met every adversity with grace and humor and taught each of us how to deal with life's uncertainties. Please join with me in sending our deepest sympathies to her family and friends.

We will miss her greatly.

**Chief Jim Johnston**  
Moraga-Orinda Fire District

*Contra Costa Sun*  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22, 2001

## Lamorinda Briefs

### Local fire district secures new service providers

Last week, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board authorized the fire chief to enter into a contractual agreement with Wittman Enterprises to provide the billing and collection services for the district's ambulance services.

Staff had recommended Wittman because they felt that the firm had the experience and expertise to best serve the district and its needs. The firm is familiar with the district's current patient information reporting system. At 6.3 percent of net collectibles, the firm also offered the district a competitive pricing structure, as well as the lowest bid. Wittman had also received a strong recommendation from the San Ramon Valley Fire and Protection District.

Interviews were conducted on Aug. 9, during which the board inquired about initiation of the billing system; integration of in-house data collection systems; impact on paramedics in the field; billing options; requirements for collection; the process of initiating billing for transport and customer relations and public perception.

Also that evening, the board approved a \$131,860 contract with Aztec Consultants to provide project management services for the new Station #44.

Aztec will oversee pre-design and the overall project management of the renovation and reconstruction of Station #44 on Orchard Road in Orinda. The firm provided the fire district with the same services during the construction of Station #42 on Moraga Road in Moraga.

# Foliage control and water flow top the list for fire committee

By Paula King

STAFF WRITER

The Orinda Fire Safety Committee agreed on a project that would upgrade water service to a minimum of 1,000 gallons per minute from one hydrant for 90 percent of the city's fire hydrants. The estimated cost exceeds \$13 million.

"This puts Orinda in a much safer state than where we started," said Orinda City Council member Allan Tabor, who serves as the committee's city representative.

Last week, they met to determine the scope of work to mitigate fire hazards and to improve the city's water pipe distribution system.

"With this project we are going to see system-wide improvements across the community," said Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Jim Johnston. "It's a great beginning and a substantial increase from where we are now."

Johnston referred to the project as a starting point, since the ultimate goal is to upgrade to a total of 2,250 gallons per minute, from three adjacent or reasonably nearby hydrants flowing at the same time. This would cost more than \$53 million.

At the last meeting, the committee decided to initiate a ballot measure to fund the water pipe upgrade project.

An election date in March 2002 was being targeted, until Tabor announced that the Orinda Union School District is planning to pursue a parcel tax increase on that March ballot.

The committee decided not to compete with the school district in the same election and

will look later at specific election dates in June or November of next year. The committee and the district also plan to join forces and work together during both campaigns.

Another important component for avoiding potential fire hazards was presented in the form of a Hazardous Vegetation Mitigation Program.

"Vegetation management is an integral part of the program. If you don't have vegetation, then you don't have anything to burn in a fire," said committee member and M-O fire district board member Pete Wilson. "That's one of the advantages of vegetation management."

Wilson added that the scope and nature of the program needs to be determined, since it's a top priority at this point.

"Vegetation is more important than the fire flow upgrade and cheaper," said Orinda resident Clyde Vaughn. "Vegetation control should be a precursor to fire flow. We should execute this before moving forward with the fire flow tax."

Moraga-Orinda Fire Marshal Tonya Hoover highlighted the program's essential components. She stressed the need for employment of two, full-time employee vegetation inspectors to conduct inspections, mitigation and removal.

This would put Orinda in 100 percent compliance with state requirements within the Bates Bill, according to Hoover.

"In order for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to enforce these requirements within the Fire Code, the district included the Bates Bill requirements into its Fire Code Ordinance as part

of Article 14, Exterior Hazard Control," Hoover wrote in her report.

The salaries for two inspectors to enforce this program would cost \$172,000 annually. One-time start up costs for equipment and materials will be \$30,000.

The second portion of the program would be a neighborhood participation project to remove vegetation through a pick-up service for trimmings twice a week. Implementation of this would cost \$30,000 a year.

"It's the philosophy of getting out in the public. It's not just enforcement, but assistance," said Johnston. "We are providing alternatives."

Some residents were concerned that the program may alter the natural setting of Orinda. Johnston assured them that the program is about managing vegetation in order to control a potential fire.

"We would work with neighborhoods and property owners to help them understand fire danger, relating to vegetation," said Hoover. "We will take a lot of effort to work with them as a part of the educational process."

The question that remains is how a program related to vegetation will be funded. The program may be built into the ballot initiative or funded separately.

At the Sept. 5 meeting, funding mechanisms and the election date will also be discussed. On Oct. 11, the meeting will focus on the adoption of ballot language. Then on Oct. 18, the group will meet with EBMUD.

### Clarifying carrying capacity

With the growing interest/concern about the currently available volume of water from our fire hydrants, homeowners should be aware of the capacity of water flow from the hydrant nearest their home and in their neighborhood.

- Red bonnet (or hood) can release less than 500 gallons per minute (g.p.m.).
- Orange: Between 500 and 1,000 g.p.m.
- Green: Between 1,000 and 1,500 g.p.m. (an adequate flow)
- Blue: 1,500 g.p.m.

The four hydrant types are also color coded on pounds per square inch (PSI). Under the water system improvement plan being discussed, 1,000 gallons-per-minute of water flow from one hydrant for 90 percent of our community would cost \$13 million (approximately). Either a special election or general election funding proposition is on the horizon for 2002.

Peter Muller, Orinda

*Contra Costa Sun 9-12-2001*

THE SUPERIOR COURT  
OF THE  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA



INDUCTION OF THE HONORABLE  
**JOHN W. KENNEDY**  
Superior Court of California  
County of Contra Costa

September 28, 2001  
4:00 p.m.

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAMBERS**  
651 Pine Street  
Martinez, California

100 37<sup>TH</sup> STREET, DEPARTMENT 8  
RICHMOND, CA 94805-2135

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE  
INDUCTION CEREMONY OF

**JOHN W. KENNEDY**

JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2001 AT 4:00 P.M.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' CHAMBERS  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, ROOM 107  
651 PINE STREET  
MARTINEZ, CALIFORNIA

RECEPTION  
5:30 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.  
ROUND HILL COUNTRY CLUB  
3169 ROUND HILL ROAD  
ALAMO, CALIFORNIA

RSVP BY SEPTEMBER 21, 2001  
TELEPHONE NO. (510) 374-3252

*Contra Costa Sun*

# Rescuers hit hard by Trade Center tragedy

By Meera Pal

STAFF WRITER

As the world watched two commercial airliners crash into the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center, Dr. Ben Ho began to prepare himself mentally, knowing he would be deployed to the site in a matter of weeks.

As a member of the Oakland Urban Search and Rescue Team since its inception in 1990, Ho has been sent to a number of disaster sites, including the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, but nothing could prepare him for what he was going to see when he arrived at Ground Zero.

"It's way beyond what you could ever imagine," says the Moraga resident. "It's an assault on all of your senses."

Ho, a reserve officer for Moraga police, was at the San Francisco Airport with Moraga K-9 officer Jeff Flohr, training with their dogs when they heard of the early morning attacks. They were sent back to their

agencies, in fear of a wave of terrorism hitting the West Coast.

With 28 USAR Teams nation-wide — eight in California — Ho and his Oakland-based team were not deployed until late-September.

Once there, the team encountered adverse weather conditions, and a scene that was unimaginable. Deep below the rubble, fires still burned, the smoke rising above the city.

"It was always our hope that we would find someone, somewhere in some void," says Ho of the floors below the twin towers.

Ho remembers a man who was able to survive longer than expected in the Cypress Structure collapse after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

While Americans everywhere can feel the sadness and explore their anger, as a member of Oakland's USAR Team, Ho has to put his emotions aside and do his job. For the firefighters never involved in a disaster

rescue, he says many were unable to deal with their emotions.

Even though this is his 12th year with the Oakland Team, "each (disaster) seems to be the worst we've ever seen," he says.

Each USAR Team travels with four dogs, two search technicians, two doctors, four paramedics, specialized searchers and 56,000 pounds of rescue gear. As a trained surgeon and technician, Ho can alternate his role on the team, if necessary.

The aftermath in New York was difficult for Ho to simply put aside. While there, he attended the funeral for two of his friends on the NY USAR Team, and spoke with survivors. He learned of one paramedic who ran into Tower 2 to rescue people, only to have the tower collapse on top of him. Amazingly, the paramedic managed to dig himself out of the rubble and ran to



STEVE MASLANKA/STAFF

**DR. BEN HO SHARES HIS STORIES** from Ground Zero with Moraga fire crew. He was part of a recent rescue mission in New York.

See RESCUE, Page 2

# Rescue

FROM PAGE 1

Tower 1 to help rescue more people. When Tower 1 collapsed, he was blown through a plate glass window. He was rushed to the hospital and checked by doctors, following which he quickly dressed in his smoldering gear and went back to rescue more people.

"The stress level for all firefighters was through the roof because they heard the screaming of babies and their brothers and sisters from beneath the rubble," says Ho.

Ho is amazed that in the face of losing their fire chief, head of Search and Rescue and EMS, New York City was able to mount such a monumental rescue.

Darrell Lee, engineer paramedic/EMS coordinator for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, had a reaction similar to Ho's. As a member of a local Disaster Medical Assistance Team, Lee knew he would be going to New York in the weeks to come.

For three weeks, Lee worked on Ground Zero, coordinating communications among the five medical sites encircling the WTC. He ensured that each medical team was able to contact each other and had radio back-up. His job was made easier with roughly 600 Nextel phones donated to New York's Emergency Services office. Lee was also amazed that city officials were able to function after their Office of Emergency Management, located on the seventh floor of 7 World Trade Center, collapsed in the days following.



STEVE MALLANKA/STAFF

**DR. BEN HO** is from a local Search and Rescue team.

"These (towers) weren't just symbols of financial power; they were symbols of strength," says Lee.

Returning to normalcy is often difficult for the men and women of rescue teams; some are not able to overcome the intense emotions. Fortunately, Ho and Lee both credit their family support for keeping them sane.

In the Ho family, search and rescue is a common topic, with Ho's oldest son one of the physicians on the San Diego USAR Team, and his youngest son a reserve for the M-O Fire District. Ho also teaches a Confined Medicine course and trains search dogs. "There are so many rewards to serving your community and your country," says Ho. "But I am very aware of the psychological and emotional penalty that we pay. We leave a little piece of ourselves everywhere we go."

# District now charges for ambulance ride

By Meera Pal

STAFF WRITER

Effective retroactively from Oct. 1, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District will begin charging patients for ambulance transport under a 12-month pilot program.

As adopted, the fees for transport are as follows: Advanced Life Support (ALS), \$700; Basic Life Support (BLS), \$500; oxygen administration, \$50; and mileage charge, \$12 per mile.

According to Fire Chief Jim Johnston, a patient having a respiratory problem that is potentially life-threatening would fall under an ALS situation, while a broken arm would be considered a BLS case.

In determining the charges, the district staff reviewed fee schedules from ambulance transporters throughout California, with the focus on charges within the Bay Area.

For American Medical Response ambulance service, the staff found the average charge for a Typical Medical Incident to be \$1,001.84; a Typical Trauma Incident to be \$859.65; and a Typical Cardiac Arrest to be \$1,228.40. However with AMR, each equipment and medication

used is billed individually — the ALS base rate is \$664.55, a disposable blanket is \$14.21, and an EKG monitor is \$85.38.

In order to simplify the process for the M-O Fire District, staff decided to aggregate the fees at the transport level, rather than itemize every supply and medication dispensed. And, actual district costs were reviewed to ensure all costs were recovered.

"We wanted a fairly simple system, so we aren't going to be tagging on additional costs for medical equipment. We want paramedics to focus on patient care and not inventory," said Johnston.

The pilot program was originally approved to help determine whether sufficient funding would be available to support an upgrade to a 19-person minimum staffing level. In January, the district hired Moraga-based Alliance Healthcare Consulting to conduct a demographic and health insurance study. Conservative numbers indicated a possible net revenue of \$521,029. The district currently operates on a 17-person staffing level and has evaluated the impact on response time,

See AMBULANCE, Page 2

Contra Costa Sun 10-24-2001

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2001

3

## Push for fire safety tax on ballot

By Paula King

STAFF WRITER

The Orinda Fire Safety Committee supported a ballot issue during the general election on Nov. 5, 2002 for fire system improvements. The working committee is currently studying five possible funding options.

"We want people to vote on this," said Orinda City Council member Allan Tabor. "It's such a huge capital measure that going through a general election is better."

The committee decided against the March election, since the Orinda Union School District is possibly pursuing a parcel tax on that ballot. They also felt that a special election would be too costly.

"Whatever we do, it should be given to the voters to decide on," said committee chairman and Moraga-Orinda Fire District board member Pete Wilson. "It will probably be water pipe replacement and we will be asking for \$12 million total from local citizens."

City Manager Bill Lindsay provided a brief overview of funding mechanisms at last

month's meeting and a more detailed analysis at last week's meeting. He will prepare some cost benefits for each of the choices before the next meeting.

Among the options are a general obligation bond, assessment district, special parcel tax, utility charge or utility tax.

"I'm not in favor of utility charges," said Tabor. "I'm leaning towards general obligation bonds and assessment districts."

The committee hopes to adopt a funding mechanism at the next meeting. By then, they will have some city council input.

At their meeting on Nov. 6, the council will review the proposed vegetation management program. The committee has agreed that the program is worthwhile, but has yet to decide whether or not it should be a joint venture between the fire district and the city of Orinda.

"The advantages of a double headed program is to marry these two programs as a joint project to reduce vegetation," said Wilson.

Vocal members of the audience agreed on the importance of vegetation management as a simple, cost effective solution

for fire safety.

Some residents felt that the community has received limited information and public input regarding important decisions related to water distribution system improvements and the hazardous vegetation mitigation program.

"We need to sit down and arrive at a consensus. We need to involve the leaders in each neighborhood," said Orinda resident Betty Murphy.

Wilson assured the audience that the election process will be educational in addressing many unanswered questions.

Orinda resident Roger James said this could help citizens determine their own level of support.

Former council member Sarge Littlehale said that projects like this sometimes take years. He mentioned the Heart of Orinda project, which took eight years to bring to fruition with public outreach and education.

The next Fire Safety Committee meeting is on Nov. 8. Visit the city of Orinda's Web Site at [www.ci.orinda.ca.us](http://www.ci.orinda.ca.us) for the posting of future meetings and general information.

## Ambulance

FROM PAGE 1

emergency operations, risk potential and district coverage, if staffing levels are to increase.

Under the district's collection policy, the board recognized that Moraga and Orinda residents already support the fire district through property taxes and the fire flow tax, and therefore decided that any required co-payments should be waived. Non-residents, however, will still incur a co-payment, unless fee recovery would cause undue financial hardship.

For those patients who may be financially impacted and unable to pay for transport services, the district has established Hardship Waivers. Patients must complete a Hardship Application and be approved by the fire chief on a case by case basis. If an individual is not approved by the chief, he or she may appeal to the district's board of directors.

The collection process will involve an initial billing invoice and a follow-up

statement. The district has already entered into an agreement with Wittman Enterprises, who will provide the billing and collection services for the pilot program in exchange for 6.3 percent of net collectibles.

The board also approved the purchase of two "super duty" ambulances from a Santa Ana, Cal. company for \$280,551.60, including sales tax and fees.

The new ambulances will replace one existing unit and allow for the future deployment of a third ambulance within the district, with another in reserve. The two new units will enhance the comfort of patients being transported, by improving the harsh ride currently experienced.

A total of \$250,000 has already been set aside in the 2001-2002 budget for the two ambulances, with an additional \$52,000 allotted for providing equipment.

Contra Costa Sun

# Shifting schedules increase on-duty hours

## ■ Moraga-Orinda Fire District opts for pilot 48/96 work routine

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

With firefighters commuting from as far away as Sacramento and Santa Cruz, local firefighter Union 1230 is pleased that the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board agreed to adopt a pilot program for a revised

firefighter work schedule at their meeting last month.

The changing ratio has raised some local concerns, however.

Beginning shortly after the first of the new year, firefighters in the district will test a new 48/96 work schedule — working 48 hours straight, with 96 hours off.

The crews are currently operating under a 3/4 schedule — working 24 hours every other day for three shifts, with four days off.

Given that it is getting more and

more difficult for firefighters to live in the community in which they work, a 3/4 schedule often adds to an already stressful commute for those who live outside the district, said Lou Paulson, president of Union 1230.

"There is a sense of continuity if you're there for two days in a row," said Paulson. "It is a better way to serve the community."

He noted that often he receives last minute requests for classroom or station visits that cannot be filled until his next 24-hour shift, a day later.

Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Jim Johnston said he sees the revised schedule as a benefit for both the district and firefighters.

"It helps them in that they don't have to do as much commuting ... and this is a way for us to do our part for the energy crisis — there are less cars on the road, and less fuel being used," said Johnston.

Other benefits include increased staff morale and a reduction of 18 payable hours in overtime compensation under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

When Johnston contacted other fire districts who had already implemented a 48/96 schedule, he was told that there was also less trading of shifts among the firefighters.

However, some say there are disadvantages to increasing a shift from 24 to 48 hours.

"What about their productivity and mental acuity in their second 24 hour shift?" asked Moraga resident Dick Olsen. "With respect to paramedics,

See FIREFIGHTERS, Page 2

## Firefighters

FROM PAGE 1

"How sharp are they going to be on their diagnoses?"

According to Glen Lewis, fire captain at #43 and the district's representative to the union, "It is not unusual for (firefighters) to work 48 or 72 hours right now — given overtime and sick leave.

Johnston added that a firefighter can be tired at any time, especially if there is a significant event, regardless of how many hours they have been on duty.

But, Olsen sees patient safety as a parallel to medical interns and firefighter/paramedics. "If interns and residents aren't supposed to work more than 24 hours — then should a firefighter/paramedic work more than 24 hours?" asked Olsen, referring to a draft bill created by the American Medical Student Association and Cong. John Conyers, Jr. (R-N.Y.) that would

limit residents to an 80-hour work week, including a limit of 24 consecutive hours worked in one shift.

While Union 1230 represents firefighters in the Contra Costa County Fire District as well, there are no plans to revise work schedules for firefighters in that district. The Union is focusing on retirement benefit negotiations, said Paulson.

Steve Maiero, EMS Chief for Con Fire says if the discussion does arise, the pilot program in M-O Fire will provide valuable information.

"Moraga-Orinda is a good place to have a test program since they may not have as many calls as (other stations)," said Maiero.

The fire board voted unanimously to implement the pilot program for one year. However, Director Robin Berens voted his approval only after ensuring the program could be stopped at any time if problems should arise.

## Fire district to sell land to recover station costs

■ It could sell parcels on Rheem Boulevard and Moraga Road to recoup the cost of a new station

By Dogen Hannah  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

MORAGA — Aiming to recover some of the \$2.4 million it spent to build a fire station, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District plans to sell some land.

The district is moving toward placing two properties on the market: 331 Rheem Blvd., which had been the site of fire Station 42; and part of a parcel at 555 Moraga Road, where the new Station 42 opened in July.

"We really don't have any other need at this point (for) the property," Chief Jim Johnston said of the Rheem Boulevard parcel. "We very much want to recoup some of the expenses for

building the new station, and this is one way to do it."

The district moved from the Rheem Boulevard station because the four-decade old building was obsolete and too small. A district-commissioned appraisal of the half-acre parcel set its value at \$430,000.

The town's land-use rules allow for office and professional uses on the site. Those rules would change under proposed revisions to the town's general plan and might allow for a mix of housing and commercial development, for example.

"There will be some unique opportunities here," said Lori Salamack, the town's planning director.

The fire district also intends to subdivide the 1.7-acre Moraga Road parcel, carving off for sale between one-half and three-quar-

See LAND, Page 4

## Land

FROM PAGE 3

ters of an acre. The land probably is about as valuable as the Rheem Boulevard property, or about \$14 per square foot, though the district has not appraised it, Johnston said.

Before the fire district can sell part of the Moraga Road property, it must subdivide the parcel. That could take three to six months under the best circumstances, Salamack said.

One potential bidder is the town of Moraga.

It might buy a bowling alley adjacent to the new fire station

and build a city government complex on the site. Depending on the complex's design, the town might need the fire district property for more space, Town Manager Karen Stein said.

As on Rheem Boulevard, the land-use rules for the Moraga Road property could change under the proposed general plan revisions. Rules had allowed for commercial, retail, professional, recreational and a few other uses.

Dogen Hannah covers Walnut Creek and Lamorinda. Reach him at 925-945-4794 or dhanah@cctimes.com.

CONTRA COSTA TIMES NOVEMBER 29, 2001

# Fire safety group urges a new tax

By Paula King  
STAFF WRITER

The Orinda Fire Safety Committee recommends that the Orinda City Council and Moraga-Orinda Fire District board support asking Orinda voters for an increase to the existing fire flow tax on the Nov. 5, 2002 ballot.

This increase of up to 12 cents will exclusively fund improvements to the water supply distribution system. The tax measure would require a two-thirds majority vote.

"We are essentially trying to amend the current piece of fire flow legislation," said committee chairman and Moraga-Orinda Fire District board member Pete Wilson.

Only five cents is currently levied in the Orinda service area from the voter approved six-cent tax. The tax is levied by parcel based on the square footage of buildings.

In 1997, a tax was approved to fund the long-range capital needs of the fire district, includ-

ing fire protection, prevention and suppression, and emergency medical services, equipment and facilities.

A 12-cent increase would raise about \$1 million annually and cost taxpayers an average of \$170 per year, according to Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Jim Johnston. He said this would allow the project to be completed as soon as 2018.

A six-cent increase was proposed by some residents who attended last week's meeting. According to Johnston, that alternative would take 24 years to finance the proposed water pipe upgrades.

Of the 708 existing fire hydrants in Orinda, 206 fall below the 1,000 gallon per minute mark, while 495 hydrants have a g.p.m. of 1,000 or more, according to William Kirkpatrick, manager of water distribution planning for the East Bay Municipal Utility District. This written information was dated May 2001. In his letter, Kirk-

patrick also noted that after the installation of the proposed \$13 million project, based on the Orinda Fire Flow Draft Master Plan, there will still be 80 hydrants below 1,000 g.p.m.

At the board's meeting on Dec. 5, the idea of polling Orinda residents on preferences between the two funding options was discussed. Some residents felt this may show whether Orindans favor a fire flow tax over a localized assessment district.

"The idea of going back to the communities involved through existing homeowners' associations to take a poll or pulse of the community was presented," Wilson said.

Committee member and councilman Allan Tabor thought that idea was counter-productive. He said that as elected officials, the residents of Orinda put faith in them to make decisions.

See FIRE, Page 2

## Fire

FROM PAGE 1

"I'm prepared to move forward on the fire flow tax," Tabor said. "We've been working on this long enough."

Wilson said that an assessment district takes a lot of preparatory work that is expensive and laborious. Annual assessments are collected with the property taxes and involve the establishment of a benefit formula by parcel with legal notices provided to property owners of a proposed assessment levy.

"Any form of a fire flow tax or assessment district is going to be a hard fight," said Wilson. "I think anything more than a six-cent raise is doomed for failure."

At a prior meeting, Wilson said that the fire flow tax would be easy to put on the ballot and simple to administer, upon voter approval. Established fire district service zones, funding numbers, levy codes and revenue codes could be utilized.

If the city council and fire board approved the recommendation, the necessary ballot language could be written early next year. An election committee may also be formed at that time.

The council will discuss this issue at their meeting on Jan. 8 and it is on the fire board's agenda for tonight. They will meet at 7 p.m. in the board room at 1280 Moraga Way. The committee will meet again on Thursday, Jan. 10 at 7 p.m. at the Orinda Community Center.

Contra Costa Sun 12/19/01

☆ WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2001

Contra Costa Sun

## Fire board gives tacit OK to tax

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board supports developing a ballot measure for the Orinda service zone, increasing the fire flow tax by 12 cents, specifically to improve the city's water system infrastructure.

The board voiced support at its meeting last week — a symbolic gesture, given that the exact ballot language will have to return to the board for final approval.

The request for support was brought before the board by directors Pete Wilson and Robin Berens, both of whom sit on the Orinda Fire Safety Committee.

"The money that is generated by the 12 cents is strictly limited to funding water pipe improvements in the Orinda fire zone," Wilson explained to the board.

The additional 12 cents will be levied on top of the existing six-cent tax Orinda voters approved in 1997 at the formation of the fire district.

A great deal of discussion and time went into determining that an additional fire tax is the appropriate funding mechanism for Orinda's water pipe problems. "I would vote for this recommendation," said board president Peter Scurr. "I feel the voters really have to decide."

The specific ballot language should appear before the board as early as February after the fire safety committee agrees on the wording.

However, there was concern about the brunt

See FIRE TAX, Page 3

## Fire Tax

FROM PAGE 1

of the election falling in the laps of the fire district.

"We're being the nice guys here, which is fine if it can get the folks what they want and what they need," said director Gordon Nathan, who questioned who would be subsidizing the election costs.

The board agreed that the city of Orinda should help in funding the election expense, since they have "backed off" funding the water pipe improvements.

During public comment, Orinda resident Clyde Vaughn spoke about concerns with the ballot measure, adding that the board does not have all the information — there is no knowledge on the inflation factor; interest rates to East Bay Municipal Utilities District; whether EBMUD will require using EBMUD staff during construction and whether or not the tax will have a sunset.

"With all of these unknowns, it seems ridiculously premature for this board to adopt an incomplete proposal," Vaughn said.

He added that only one-fifth of Orinda households will see a benefit from this increased tax and subsequent construction.

The 12-cent tax will raise roughly \$1 million annually and cost the taxpayers an average of \$170 per year. This would allow the project to be completed in 2018.

Of the 708 existing fire hydrants in Orinda, 206 fall below the 1,000 gallon per

minute criteria, while 495 hydrants have a g.p.m. of 1,000 or more, according to William Kirkpatrick, manager of water distribution planning for EBMUD. He also noted that after the installation of the proposed \$13 million project, there will still be 80 hydrants below 1,000 g.p.m.

Fire Marshall Tonya Hoover added the multi-million dollar project will also add 49 new hydrants, while a number of neighborhoods will see an overall increase in their fire flow among three hydrants, which is the ultimate goal of the fire district. Hoover said the district has a standard of

2,250 g.p.m. from three hydrants.

The board voted four to one to support developing the ballot measure, with Nathan voting against. He said that he did not feel comfortable voting in favor of the request without more information on what exactly voters will be asked to approve. He would also like to see something in writing from EBMUD on their commitment to fund even part of the project.

The Orinda Fire Safety Committee meets to develop ballot language 7 p.m. Jan. 10, 2002 at the Orinda Community Center, 26 Orinda Way.

## Parties iron out differences on fire flow project

Following two negotiation sessions among staff members of the East Bay Municipal Utilities District, the city of Orinda and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, stumbling blocks in the three party agreement involving proposed fire flow improvements in Orinda were resolved last week.

Fire Chief Jim Johnston projected the construction should be completed within six years, and EBMUD should be reimbursed within 16 to 20 years.

The three groups had almost reached consensus when several additions were made by EBMUD. They included: an additional 20 percent contingency on top of the existing 20 percent contingency; a \$450,000 additional cost had been added; and the citizens of Orinda were being asked to reimburse the water district for a portion of the engineering study.

Once all of the attorneys have examined the agreement, it will be brought before the Orinda City Council on July 16, and then before the Moraga-Orinda Fire Board on July 17.

The matter will probably be placed on the ballot for this November's election. The filing deadline is July 22.

7-3-2002 CC Sun

## Fire board fleshes out details for fire flow tax

By Meera Pal

STAFF WRITER

If all goes as planned, the residents of Orinda will be voting on whether or not to increase their fire flow tax from 6 cents to 18 cents in this upcoming November election.

Moraga-Orinda Fire board members will make their final decision about placing the measure on the November ballot, finalize language for the ballot, and approve the impartial analysis for the voter pamphlet at their June 19 meeting.

If the measure passes, the increased fire flow tax in Orinda will help the fire district pay for

a roughly \$13 million upgrade to the inadequate water pipe system in the city.

The Orinda Fire Safety Committee determined in 1999 that to upgrade the city's water pipes would cost approximately \$53 million to make the system improvements to achieve a fire flow standard of 2,250 gallons per minute from three adjacent fire hydrants.

Because the overall project cost is financially overwhelming, the OFSC developed a list of 49 projects as phase one of fire flow improvements. This \$13 million

See FIRE, Page 2

## Fire

### Moraga-Orinda Fire

**Roof fire:** Fire crews were called to what began as a two-alarm fire on Roberts Court in Moraga on Monday at approximately 3:30 p.m.

A neighbor called 911 to report smoke coming from the house. When the fire crews arrived, the two occupants were still inside. Fire crews quickly determined that the fire was originating in the attic. Eight engines eventually were called to respond to the fire, as well as two medical units. Mutual aid was called from the Contra Costa County Fire Department, as well as AMR. Most of the fire crews were released around 6 p.m. They had extinguished the fire, which had damaged the majority of the roof, as well as

most of the interior walls, where the fire had extended. There is no estimate at this time on the damage costs, however, Battalion Chief Pete Nowicki said that most of the contents were saved.

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**Open house:** On Saturday April 13 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. the Moraga-Orinda Fire Department is holding an Open House at Station 45, 33 Orinda Way. The fire station will be open to the public to view displays on paramedic equipment, earthquake preparedness, weed abatement, Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Rescue One Foundation. They will also have the new Wildland Fire Engine, new paramedic Rescue Ambulance and the 97-foot ladder truck on display.



**FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDIC** Dennis "Buzz" Aquilina watches as firefighter/paramedic Matt Epperson reaches for the home-made croutons, while firefighter/paramedic Vince Matulich waits patiently to eat the meal prepared by Aquilina.

STEVE BABULIAK/STAFF

## Firefighters bond over culinary feats

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Just like any household, getting everyone to the dinner table on time at the firehouse can be a major feat.

After Moraga-Orinda firefighter/engineer Dennis "Buzz" Aquilina makes the call over the intercom, "Dinner. Dinner is ready," the men wander in slowly ... very slowly.

Captain Randy Kosanke makes his way out of the office, while firefighter/paramedics Vince Matulich, Steve Anaya and Matt Epperson stroll in a few minutes later in their Sunday best — gym shorts and T-shirts — straight off the basketball court.

Just as everyone is about to sit down, the phone rings — it's for Buzz.

After a few minutes of polite waiting for the chef, the guys



decide to start serving.

"You know every time, without eating, it's going to be good," says Kosanke of Buzz' famous cooking.

Tonight, the men dig into a feast consisting of Caesar salad with made-from-scratch dressing and fresh baked croutons, mouth-watering garlic bread with sautéed garlic, and a won-

derfully decadent fettucine alfredo.

Quickly the food is passed around, and the eating begins.

The Junkyard Dogs, a.k.a. the Station #41 B-Shift, cherish their moments together at the dinner table. It allows them to catch up on each other's lives ... and tease one another without mercy, of course.

Some days, however, it seems the forces may be conspiring to keep the guys away from their dinner table.

This past Sunday, before Buzz could even get into the parking lot of the local Safeway to shop for the night's meal, the crew was sent out on two back-to-back calls.

Around 4:30 p.m., the almost melodic tones (gone are the days of harsh bells) sounded, and a call sent the crew out to an 81-year-old man who was feeling ill. Quickly, the jokes

subsided, and the crew got down to business.

Anaya and Epperson headed off in the ambulance, while Kosanke, Buzz and Matulich jumped into the 97-foot ladder truck. With lights blazing and sirens sounding, the men headed down Moraga Way toward Larch Avenue, ready for anything.

At the house on Larch, Anaya and Epperson were already inside when Matulich and Buzz ran up the steps. Inside the house, it was all seriousness and efficiency; the jokes were on hold. However, the family dynamic still pervaded. The men seemed to know one another so well; it was as if they were reading each other's minds — Kosanke had the IV tubes ready for Matulich before he was even asked.

See BISTRO, Page 2

# Bistro

FROM PAGE 1

The call ended with the patient being taken to the hospital in the ambulance and the three in the ladder truck planning to shop for dinner. But as soon as the seatbelts were clicked, another call came over the radio.

One of the residents at the Aegis Assisted Living center was behaving aggressively.

"There is not much we can do in this type of situation, other than find out whether she has Alzheimer's or dementia. And whether she has been taking her meds," says Matulich.

Once inside, he took control, speaking with the woman in a very calm voice, trying to determine what had happened. In the meantime, three officers from the Moraga Police Department arrived.

It was close to 5:30 p.m. when the crew climbed back into their truck and finally headed to Safeway for the ingredients needed for the night's meal.

While Buzz is famous for his culinary creations, all of the firefighters at #41 know how to cook, and know how to cook well. Cooking is a shared chore, like cleaning and yard work.

Still, everyone jokes that Buzz is the famous chef of #41, with his own monthly column called "Buzz' Bistro" appearing in the M-O Fire District's newsletter.

"If I hadn't become a firefighter, I would have become a chef," says Buzz, who has been cooking since he was a little boy growing up in Marin County.

He has even taken a number of cooking classes to refine his hobby.

One day he may even start his own certification program for firefighters — Firefighter Cooking 101.

"There would be two parts to this class: how to shop and how to cook," Buzz jokes.

Dinner is a sacred time for the crew. Kosanke has deemed it the TV-free hour, which is not a problem, since the men would rather talk and laugh among themselves.

"We are closer because of our dinners," says Kosanke. "We catch up on the families and share in each other's lives."

Kosanke has been a firefighter for 26 years, starting with the Moraga Fire District before the merge. As he wheeled the shopping cart around Safeway, catching Buzz finds, Kosanke shares memories of dinners past.

"It used to be more meat and potatoes — a lot of prime rib," he says. "We are a lot more health conscious."

Now when local residents and merchants bring food as thanks, it's sandwiches, not burgers and fries.

The sense of family among the crew, reveals itself in every aspect of their interactions.

When Anaya and Epperson are transporting a patient to the hospital, getting back to the station later than the rest, Buzz will usually wrap up their dinner plates and keep their food warm in the oven.

Often, dinner can be irreparably damaged,



STEVE BABULJAK/STAFF

**DENNIS "BUZZ" Aquilina** pulls out home-made croutons for Sunday dinner.

"We are closer because of our dinners. We catch up on the families and share in each other's lives."

— Captain Randy Kosanke

like the time a call came in just as Buzz was placing pasta into a boiling pot of water. With a degree of envy, he speaks of the timing feature on the technologically savvy gas stove at the new Station #42 — when the alarm sounds, the gas shuts off.

Dinner is wrapping up and the men are getting ready to play the traditional game of Boss Dice to determine who will be the lucky dishwasher for the evening. Ten minutes later, as the game is narrowed down to two players, Buzz comments that the dishes could have been done by now — as the chef, he of course, is exempt from the game.

Boss Dice is a combination of Yahtzee and Poker. Five dice are rolled and the player with the best hand is eliminated. Finally, Epperson is the last man standing — he is the designated dishwasher.

As he walks into the kitchen with a pile of dirty dishes in hand, Kosanke, Anaya and Matulich follow, ready to help out one of their own.

"Even though he lost the game, we're still here to help him," says Kosanke.

Contra Costa Sun

# Fire board considers charge for ambulance services

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

As part of an in-depth staff and budget review, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District will spend \$15,000 to determine revenue available from recouping ambulance costs.

The concept was presented to the board in December by Moraga resident Sherry Hancock, president and CEO of Healthcare Consulting Associates. The fire district approached Hancock because she has 12 years of experience in the development and operations of health-care programs.

Most ambulance services bill patients, who then submit claims to their insurance.

According to Chief Jim Johnston, the Moraga-Orinda district's fees would be based on "a conservative reimbursement plan."

The fire district is considering using any additional revenue for staff expansion. Past analysis has shown that the district can provide a higher level of service and coverage if it were to implement a staffing level of 19 personnel, up from the current 17.

A 19-person model would provide dedicated ambulance staffing at Stations 41 and 45 and adaptive response at Station 44. An adaptive response is when the same personnel who operate the engine also operate the ambulance.

At last Wednesday night's meeting, board directors Pete Wilson and Robin Berens debated the purpose of the study — whether or not they were placing the cart before the horse by conducting a study when a specific staffing model has not been chosen.

Meanwhile, directors Pete Scurr, Gordon Nathan and Ben Ho said it was better to gather all the information about alternative revenue sources to allow the public to make an educated decision.

"We need to gather data and then intelligently inform the public," said Nathan. "We would be remiss if we tell the public that we can't answer their questions."

Orinda resident Betty Murphy also questioned the need for the study, explaining that she has heard many residents say that the fire district spends money as if there were no tomorrow.

Wilson echoed her thoughts and said that he was not in favor of the study.

"We have not entertained the idea or voted in favor of the 19-person staffing level. If we don't endorse that level, then we should not spend this money," he said.

Scurr noted that the district will still look for other revenue

## Ambulance

FROM PAGE 1

sources. "But unless we have this data, we will not be able to make this analysis."

The staff report said: "The data would be very beneficial to the district regardless of the final decision regarding staffing levels. Not only could the district be more proactive in the future (because it truly knows and understands the demographics of the communities), this information could result in the development of a cost recovery program to help defray current expenses."

Healthcare Consulting Associates has access to data that the district needs in order to attain an in-depth analysis: demographic and income information for the community; age, gender, per capita income, unemployment rates; potential medical reimbursement; percentage population insured by Medicare, managed Medicare, Kaiser, commercial and other; percentage of population not covered by insurance; and district specific modeling of demographic information.

"(Hancock) has an excellent knowledge of the data that needs to be collected," said Battalion Chief Rob Goodyear. "I truly believe that she will help us to achieve the end

results."

To minimize the expense of the study, the district staff will support the consultant's efforts by providing call volume by facility; cost of medical supplies used by district personnel; accurate assessment of the kinds and types of medical incidents providing basic life support, advanced life support and trauma stabilization.

Hancock's final assessment is due back in mid-April, with information on advantages/disadvantages of outsourcing; billing options; staffing requirements; capital expenditures; legislative compliance and regulations; and advantages/disadvantages of medical assignment.

Contra Costa Sun 5-22-2002

## Berens resigns from fire board

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

With a heavy heart — and stress-intensified health concerns — Orinda Robin Berens resigned from his seat as a director of the Moraga-Orinda Fire Board last week.

In a letter to the board, Berens outlined his reason for resigning. "On the advice of my medical advisers, and after considerable serious contemplation, I have decided to resign my position on the District Board of Directors ... (my health concerns are) tending to be exacerbated by the extreme stress that I am experiencing as a result of my service on the board."

To fill the position as quickly as possible, the board decided to accept applications for the open seat and appoint someone from Division 5 — the area north of Highway 24 — to execute the remainder of Berens' term until the November 2004 election.

The board did have the option of appointing someone to the vacant seat until the upcoming November elections, notes director Pete Wilson, and may still do so. Three seats are slated for re-election this November: director Gordon Nathan who represents Division 1 in Moraga; director Peter Scurr who represents Division 4 in Orinda; and director Pete Wilson who represents Division 3 in Orinda. Most likely, the final decision will be made at the board's meeting on June 19, says board president Scurr.



JENNIFER LEE/STAFF

**MORAGA-ORINDA FIRE** Board Director Robin Berens resigns from his position due to health concerns.

Berens was elected to the

board in 2000, in the first election for the district since its incorporation in 1997. He ran opposed by his long-time neighbor Eugene Gottfried.

While Berens is disappointed that he has not been able to accomplish everything he would have liked in his almost two

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FIRE DISTRICT MORAGA-ORINDA FIRE DISTRICT

# Ever ready to breathe and compress

CCSun  
5-02-02

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

When senior Chris Davies graduates this June from Campolindo High School, he will already be a step closer to his dream of becoming a firefighter.

Thanks to a special graduation gift from the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, Davies, along with 49 other seniors, can now save a life using CPR.

"This is the biggest gift you can give — to give someone back their life," said M-O Fire Engineer Paramedic/EMS coordinator Darrell Lee.

With seniors exempt from STAR testing last week, vice principal Paul Mack thought it would be a great time to offer a CPR class. "It is a valuable skill to have," he said.

And, considering that seniors were given the option of sleeping in last week, Mack was pleased to see the large turnout at 9 a.m.

As students walked into the big gym on Thursday, they were greeted by a small contingent of firefighter-paramedics, along with roughly 40 "Little Annies" laid out on the gym floor.

Resuscitation Annie, as she was known, no longer exists as a full-size, full-weight dummy. Today, Little Annie, as Lee refers to them, consists of a torso and a head with no arms or legs. They are easier to transport and less expensive to purchase, which allows the fire district to acquire enough of them for large group CPR sessions.

"My goal is to have every senior graduate with a CPR card," Lee explained to the group. "Today, you will learn how to save your friend's life."

If a student begins choking on an apple, it may take the fire crew five minutes to arrive at Campolindo High School, or seven minutes, depending on which engine is deployed. It is those first few critical minutes that can make a difference between life or death, said Lee, since brain death can occur in five minutes, while permanent brain death occurs after 10 minutes.

However, if someone were to perform the Heimlich Maneuver before the fire engines arrived, the victim would be able to breathe and permanent brain damage could be prevented.

After watching a brief video on the signs to look for during four critical emergencies — heart attack, stroke, cardiac arrest, and choking — the



KIM MÜLLER does chest compressions on a CPR dummy as Briann Gagnon watches.

students were deployed to a station with Little Annie.

As Davies and his friend Jordan Pearce knelt beside the torso, Davies checked for a pulse and determined that the victim was unconscious. He began by giving two quick breaths and 15 chest compressions.

Giving mouth-to-mouth can be difficult for some individuals, but today, all emergency technicians carry a face shield to place over the victim's mouth — a piece of plastic with a hole. Of course, a face shield may not always be handy, in which case, Lee recommended using a T-shirt, sweatshirt, or even a \$10 bill.

Even if mouth-to-mouth is not given, compressions can be just as valuable for the unconscious, allowing the blood to circulate in the body.

While many of the seniors hope they will

never have to use the skills they learned to save a loved one's life, they know that they are prepared should the situation arise.

"It is worthwhile and something I will definitely use in the future," said senior Jessica Martin.

Two years ago, Pearce was at scout camp when a fellow scout stopped breathing. Without a thought, he quickly began mouth-to-mouth, providing two quick breaths. Amazingly, his fellow scout was able to walk away alive, thanks to Pearce's swift action and his knowledge of CPR.

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District conducts CPR training once a month. For more information on how to sign-up, call CPR Coordinator Steve Anaya at 258-4592.

## Berens

FROM PAGE 1

years on the board, he will continue his involvement in the fire district.

"I will be sitting on the other side of the table," he says. "I think I can achieve more as a citizen — the restrictions on what the board can and cannot do, with the Brown Act, are intimidating."

As a resident of the El Toyonal area, he will also continue to fight for improved fire flow in Orinda, and will not rest until the first new pipe is laid. He plans to attend fire board and Orinda Fire Safety Committee meetings to further that end.

"Amongst other things, it is

very important that (the fire flow measure) pass and there needs to be a tremendous amount of public education," says Berens, who has always encouraged the public to attend meetings and learn about the fire district.

Thus far, the district has received one application from Berens' former election opponent, Gottfried, who has continued his involvement with the district, since losing in 2000. He decided to try again for the seat representing his neighborhood, feeling he would serve the residents well.

As a citizen, Gottfried had signed up to sit on the campaign committee, but should he be appointed, he will step down as a member, as well as from several of his volunteer positions with

the fire district, including his work with the emergency communications van. However, his work as President of the Rescue One Foundation may be allowed.

While the fire board was surprised by Berens' resignation, Fire Chief Jim Johnston says that he understands his decision and that he has "appreciated everything (Berens) has done for the district."

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District will be accepting applications for Berens' seat on the board until 5 p.m. June 10. Any Orinda resident living in Division 5 and interested in applying should submit a summary of their qualifications to the district's administrative offices at Station #45, 33 Orinda Way. For more information, call 258-4599.

# Fire board gets new interim member

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

Second time was a charm for Orinda resident and newly-appointed Moraga-Orinda Fire Board director Eugene Gottfried.

After losing his bid for the Division Five seat during the 2000 elections, Gottfried decided to apply for the position, made available by the recent resignation of director Robin Berens.

"I didn't see any viable candi-

dates on the horizon — I felt it was my public duty to run," Gottfried explained.

After Berens resigned in late May, the board decided to accept applications for the seat and appoint a resident from the region of



Eugene Gottfried

Orinda, north of Highway 24. By the filing deadline, the fire district had received only two applications for the Division Five seat, Gottfried and another Orinda resident, Mark Shaffer.

Following a 20-minute interview with each candidate, the board voted to appoint Gottfried, who was immediately sworn-in that night by Superior Court

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## Fireboard

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Judge John Kennedy. Gottfried then took his seat with the board for the remainder of the meeting.

According to fire board director Pete Wilson, Gottfried was chosen from among the two applicants because of his involvement in the community, as well as with the fire district.

"Gene is highly qualified. He is heavily involved in the fire district on a volunteer basis," said Wilson. "It was just kind of obvious that Gene was the one we should appoint."

Gottfried, who became involved with the district five years ago, began his volunteer work with the district's communications van. After the merger in 1997, he joined the Rescue One Foundation. This year he is serving as president for the non-profit organization.

Recently, Gottfried was appointed co-chair of the "Citizens for Fire Safe Orinda," which will serve as the campaign committee for the upcoming election, should the fire district decide to place the proposed increase to the fire flow tax on the November ballot.

At last week's meeting, the fire district's legal counsel, Bill Ross, explained that it is uncertain as to whether or not Gottfried will serve until the upcoming election, or for the

"It was just kind of obvious that Gene was the one we should appoint."

— Pete Wilson  
Fire board director

remaining two years of Berens' term, ending in 2004.

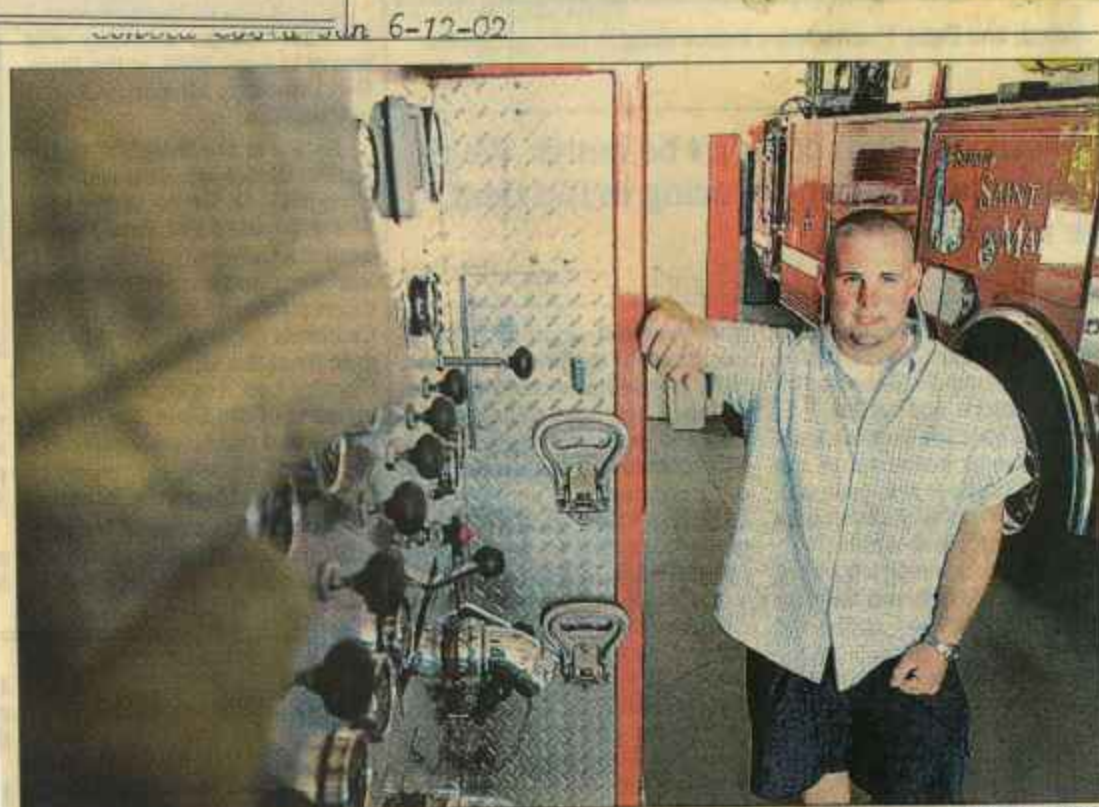
He added that when the two fire districts merged, they had made a point to ensure that two of the five seats on the board would come up for at a different time in the election cycle than the other three seats. If Gottfried serves only until November, the ratio will shift, since three seats are already open this November. Ross said he would look into the matter and have a decision for the board at its next meeting on July 17.

Even though the matter was not resolved, the board decided to appoint Gottfried in order to have a fifth director.

"It's important that we fill the position for the benefit of the community," said director Gordon Nathan.

While Gottfried is not anxious to run another campaign, he says he will make the most of his time with the fire board — whether he serves until November or until 2004.

"The most important issue before us right now is to get the fire flow issue on the ballot and passed," he said.



JENNIFER LEE/STAFF

GRADUATING SENIOR Chris Davies wants to pursue a career as a firefighter and hopefully station at the Moraga-Orinda Fire Station 41 in Moraga.

## Midstream change in fire flow plan

By Meera Pal  
STAFF WRITER

It's back to the negotiation table for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, city of Orinda and East Bay Municipal Utilities District, after EBMUD decided to modify the terms of agreement for Orinda's water pipe improvement project — specifically the portion to be completed by the water district.

The three groups had been working on specifying the costs

for the fire flow improvement project, when EBMUD presented several additions on May 21, adding significantly to the original costs as outlined in the Comprehensive Engineering Study:

■ The estimated cost of \$12,760,000 contains a 20 percent contingency. For EBMUD to agree to a "not to exceed amount," they are demanding an additional 20 percent contingency;

■ EBMUD will not pay for the hydrants that are included in the original cost estimate;

■ EBMUD wants the citizens to pick up EBMUD's portion of the engineering study, minus 9.85 percent;

■ EBMUD forgot to include a cost of \$450,000 for service transfers in the engineering study and wants that cost added.

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## EBMUD

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With these changes, the fire flow project would require a 25-year timeline for the proposed 12-cent increase to the fire flow tax, rather than the previously estimated 20 years. And, if 20 years is the maximum sunset approved by Orinda voters, EBMUD has indicated that it will not guarantee completion.

At last week's MOFD board meeting, fire district counsel Bill

Ross characterized EBMUD's modifications as "critical changes in the text of the agreement."

In a letter to William Kirkpatrick, EBMUD's Manager of the Water Distribution Planning Division, fire chief Jim Johnston stated, "The revised Agreement is not acceptable to the District and City and presents issues that the District and City believe were resolved prior to the review."

Last week, Johnston and fire board director Pete Wilson met with EBMUD representative Katy Foulkes to discuss their concerns

with the last minute additions.

All parties agreed that EBMUD staff would reconsider the agreement and return a conceptual document to the fire district, no later than July 12.

"If there are irreconcilable differences, they need to be brought back before the board and the city council," said Wilson. "It is not reasonable to expect this board to put an issue on the ballot that it could not support."

There is a July 22 deadline to place the fire flow tax measure on the Nov. 5, 2002 ballot.