

[Steve Cohn](#)

, Ardor/Valley View

[MOFD Finances Examined](#)

Now available, on www.OrindaTaskForce.org, is an independent analysis of MOFD's finances. Not only is MOFD our emergency services provider, it also consumes \$25 million of annual property tax dollars; five times what Orinda gets and over ten times what Moraga receives. Since it was formed in 1997, MOFD's tax revenue has increased over 60%, AFTER adjusting for inflation. And yet, we are served by the same 17 firefighters per shift we had 21 years ago with few additional services provided. Plus, the District has \$75 million in unfunded retirement obligations. Where has the money gone and what might the future hold?

On the web site are three basic reports: a Revenue and Expense statement; an Asset and Liability Balance Sheet; and a Financial Projection. The Revenue and Expense statement compares this year's budget to previous years going back to 2007. The Balance Sheet tracks the District's assets and liabilities back to 2010. The Financial Projection looks forward to 2038.

Some of the takeaways include:

- * We have built up a quarter of a billion dollars in retirement benefit liabilities which are only 70% funded. This funding level has not changed since 2010. Are we going to take responsibility for the \$75 million of indebtedness or pass it on to our kids?

- * 85% of the budget goes to employee compensation and has since at least 2007. If we are going to carve out funds to pay down the debts and/or provide additional services like proactive wildfire protection, how are we going to do it?

How does the community get into the conversation? Do we do it on Next Door? Do we go to Board Meetings and get our "3 minutes of fame" speaking from the floor? Do we write letters that no one else will ever see and, for the most part, won't be responded to? Both Orinda and Moraga has Citizen Finance Committees. They seem to work. They are strictly advisory with no power to impose. The community has more than its fair share of finance professionals. Some must be willing to serve. Has the MOFD Board ever considered forming its own committee? Running a \$28 million a year operation with a quarter of a billion dollars of liabilities is not something everyone has the expertise to deal with. Maybe a few more cooks won't spoil the broth.

3d ago · 42 neighborhoods in [General](#)

39 Thanks

Reply



[Melanie Light](#)

, North Orinda · 3d ago

Hi Steve, Thanks for this. Do you know finance people? Could a call be issued on NextDoor for a group of finance folk to get together?

2 Thanks

[Steve Cohn](#)

, Ardor/Valley View · 3d ago

Yes, I know several. Three of them lost the election to the union sponsored guys in November.
9 Thanks

[David Kriozere](#)

, Acalanes Valley · 3d ago

Are either the executive board or union open to a Citizens Advisory Committee or Council (CAC)?
Would one of our City, County or State representatives be willing to facilitate creating such a body?
I would think there would be value in a combined CAC covering MOFD and CCCFD (at least for those of us in Lafayette). When we lost Station 16 I wrote to the local Union executive offering to share some ideas and resources. Unfortunately they never replied. I would think a CAC of local Lamorinda citizens could help get our fire services on a good course.
6 Thanks

[Yoni Mayer](#)

, Downtown Orinda · 3d ago

Thank you for bringing this important issue to our collective consciousness.
4 Thanks

[Wesley Ayers](#)

, Rheem · 2d ago

The group lead by Steve Cohn is not now, nor has ever been, more than a collection of individuals who focus their mis-guided energies and vitriolic anger towards the Moraga Orinda Fire District. As a community, as citizens, and individuals we've been subjected to Steve and his cronies for 10+ years - everything from their publishing inaccurate and misleading articles, disrupting Board meetings, ... This is not an 'issue', MOFD is a public agency with an open agenda for their finances, Board meetings, and management of the District. This latest effort to establish a group with a naming convention that implies impartial and responsible position is just another ploy to try to validate their anger. Individuals may attend Board meetings, and we've just had an election with Board members, all open to the public. I would propose a productive, positive, communicative environment beginning with identifying this group for what it is.
0 Thanks

[Dennis Wanken](#)

, Corliss · 2d ago

Mr. Ayers, do you ever wonder why there is anger regarding MOFD? Could it be a pension plan that is the envy of other fire districts and was described in the Wall Street Journal? Without any citizen oversight, the MOFD could become a focal point of financial irregularities and political abuse. I am proud to be one of those "cronies".
8 Thanks

[Jeffrey Segall](#)

, Estates · 2d ago

I must take issue with the comments of Mr. Ayers. I am not a member of any group, nor am I a "crony" of anyone who expresses concern about the way public monies (such as those allocated to the MOFD) are spent. We as a community should value, not demean, those who bring critical

oversight to the financial condition of public agencies such as the MOFD. Name-calling and guilt-by-association have no place in this forum.

7 Thanks

[Kathy Finch](#)

, Stein Way · 2d ago

As far as I know, there isn't an "MOFD" group -- I certainly am not a member of it. I must be concerned about a pension fund that is 75 million underfunded. The MOFD should be, as well. Other cities have gone bankrupt under similar circumstances, and pensioners have lost their pensions. This is a lose-lose situation for all of us, firefighters included. I don't think the MOFD should put short-term wage increases ahead of long-term solutions to the underfunding. It's too ostrich-like.

8 Thanks

[Steve Cohn](#)

, Ardor/Valley View · 2d ago

I regret that Mr. Ayers believes that my cronies and I are on a vendetta to destroy MOFD. In reality, what we are all about is creating a sustainable emergency services entity that will provide us with the best service possible with the (considerable) monies we send its way. We formed in 2011 to provide Orinda with a report on how MOFD was serving them, 14 years after the District was formed. The financial reports posted on www.OrindaTaskForce.org are not "made up" numbers. These are values from MOFD's own financial reports, reorganized to better see where the money is going and expanded to see what constitutes the reported net retirement plan liabilities, a huge component of MOFD's financial picture. Recent events (destructive wildfires across the state) have put the community on edge. It is obvious that our community resembles those destroyed by these fires. We know the hot easterly winds blow through at times. We know that large areas of our community have been classified "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones" by the State. People are asking "what can we do?" If there is something we can do, it will probably cost money. Where will that money come from? We know that the largest local tax we pay is our real estate property tax. We know that over 20% of this tax goes to MOFD while 7% goes to the City of Orinda and 5% to the Town of Moraga. We also know that this tax has increased faster than inflation over the past 20 years. So the not-unreasonable question arises, "are some of these tax proceeds available to deal with our concern over wildfire safety?" My cronies and I have attempted to put together the puzzle of MOFD's finances for the past ten years. As a professional financial analyst I can attest that MOFD itself has not done a very good job of understanding its own finances. As the history of assets and liabilities on our website shows, MOFD's accounting differs wildly from reality. If some people feel that it is unfair or uncool or vicious to point this out, so be it. As an analyst I know that we need to start with the facts if we want to arrive at a solution. I appreciate those who have defended me and make no apologies to Mr. Ayers for my submission and analysis. I appreciate that NextDoor provides a means for disseminating news to the community. It is a useful addition to local print media, allowing for real-time discussion of issues. As we have seen, social media can be used to propagate "fake news". I attempt to be truthful in what I present. If others, such as Mr. Ayers, believe that what is presented is not truthful, the platform is here to correct any errors.

1 Thanks

[David Kriozere](#)

, Acalanes Valley · 1d ago

Note - I have not met Steve Cohn. However, as he describes his background as a professional financial analyst, that gives him the bona fides to raise these concerns. It is in all our best interest to ensure our fire services are on solid footing with infrastructure and finances.

5 Thanks

[Brett Tribble](#)

, Miramonte Gardens · 1d ago

There's nothing preventing someone from being right and being a pain in the ass...

1 Thank

[Anne Lagache](#)

, Del Rey · 18h ago

How do we get the link of this conversation to Moraga Orinda Fire District. MOFD. It doesn't link like for businesses.

[David Kriozere](#)

, Acalanes Valley · 15h ago

I do not understand if there is disagreement on this topic the reason someone is calling someone else a "pain in the ass?" I do not know any of the people in this thread. However, it seems that fire services are extremely important. I was here for the big Oakland fire. Scary stuff. This whole place is likewise at risk. That is cause enough for creating the best management, financial and operational approach. Rather than "damping down" conversation, we should be encouraging it. I am happy to involve our HOA if others here would like to get a cross-Lamorinda forum going to help improve finances of our services.

3 Thanks

[Kathy Finch](#)

, Stein Way · 11h ago

I agree -- just disagreeing with a comment is not grounds for disrespectful language and name-calling. We are adults and should be setting a good example for how to discuss issues and reach solutions to problems.

2 Thanks

[Steve Cohn](#)

, Ardor/Valley View · 31 Dec

Note to all: I forwarded this to Chief Winnacker and the MOFD Board

Chief Dave Winnacker dwinacker@mofd.org

Craig Jorgens Craig.Jorgens@gmail.com

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Steve Danziger stvedformofd@gmail.com

9 Thanks