

MOFD Finances 2020-2035

Allocation of revenue and expenses between Orinda and Moraga
January 3, 2026

MOFD, Orinda's "fire protection" provider, is a significant part of Orinda's financial picture. This year, the \$27 million of MOFD revenue attributed to Orinda represents 40% of Orinda's total municipal revenue of \$64 million when combined with [the city's own \\$37 million](#).

Orinda should understand the district's finances and the services it provides.

In May, 2025 MOFD released its [updated ten year forecast \(2026-2035\)](#). This report forecast total revenues over the period of \$490 million, exceeding expenses by \$60 million. The surplus would add to existing reserves to increase them to a total of \$115 million.

What the report does not detail is how the revenues and expenses are allocated between MOFD's two partners. This web site does that analysis. It shows that over the next ten years revenue from Orinda will exceed MOFD's expenses to serve Orinda by \$90 million. Orinda will be funding 100% of the district's reserve fund increase plus subsidize the service to Moraga with an additional \$30 million.

HISTORY

Orinda partnered with Moraga to form MOFD in 1997 after it realized the service it was receiving from the County's ConFire was sub-standard relative to the service Moraga was receiving from its local fire department. The shortfall in service was medical related (emergency medical responses account for 90% of all emergencies). Where all Moraga response units included at least one firefighter-paramedic, most ConFire firefighters (at the time) were less-qualified EMTs (emergency medical technician). And when an ambulance was required (most medical emergencies require ambulance transport to the hospital), Moraga response units included a local ambulance while ConFire stationed its ambulance(s) in Walnut Creek, which could take up to 20 minutes to arrive at an emergency in Orinda. Orinda discovered that much of the 4.6 million property tax dollars, 23% of Orinda residents' total property taxes, allocated to "fire protection" [\[1\]](#) (going to ConFire) was being used elsewhere in the county. And that if it was all used locally, Orinda could afford the same service Moraga was receiving.

So, In June 1997 Orinda and Moraga voters agreed to form MOFD, with each group being told (in their respective voters' pamphlets [\[2\]](#)) that if they agreed to form the new district, local taxes (the share of property taxes allocated to "fire protection") would be used locally: Orinda taxes in Orinda and Moraga taxes in Moraga.

The only mechanism put in place to "guarantee" this use of local taxes locally was the election of board members by division, and not "at large". Two board members exclusively representing 40% of the district which is in Orinda, two board members exclusively representing 40% of the district which is in Moraga, and the fifth member representing a division split between Orinda and Moraga (which is currently 66% Orinda).

However, after the district was formed and board members appointed, the new board never put policies in place to track where the district's tax revenue originated (Orinda vs. Moraga), nor how the cost of providing services to Orinda and Moraga was allocated between the two "partners". And neither the Orinda City Council nor the Moraga Town Council, which had petitioned the county to put the formation of the district on the ballot, stepped up to ask the new board why the use of their respective tax dollars was not being tracked, as the voters were "promised" they would be. And 28 years later, in 2026, they are still not tracked.

FINANCES

This year (2025/26) MOFD expects [3] to receive \$41 million in revenue including \$36 million from local property taxes and \$2.5 million in fees by residents for services. Their expenses for the year total \$44.2 million including:

\$6.0 million capital expenses.

\$2.1 million to special employee retirement fund reserves (on top of the \$8.9 million to the employee pension plan).

\$31.6 million in salaries and other benefits.

\$4.5 million in operating expenses.

At the end of the year MOFD expects to have \$54.8 million in reserves [4], including: General Fund - \$21.2 million

Capital Fund - \$9.4million

Employee Retirement Plans - \$24.2 million (on top of the \$215 million held by the county pension plan, CCCERA)

And the projection over the next ten years [5] is that the \$55 million will increase to \$115 million.

ALLOCATION OF REVENUE AND SERVICES

The \$35.8 million in property taxes [6] include \$34.7 allocated from the general property tax and \$1.1 million from the special (fire flow) parcel tax. These are split between Orinda and Moraga property owners: 66% from Orinda (\$23.6 million = 23.0 + 0.6) and 34% from Moraga (\$12.2 million = 11.7 + 0.5).

There are 9 firefighters station in and serving Orinda plus 8 stationed in and serving Moraga. Orindans are paying \$2.6 million per firefighter (for 3 shifts plus administration and other operating expenses) while Moragans are paying 3/4 as much, \$1.5 million per firefighter. These services cost MOFD \$2.1 million property tax dollars per firefighter position; less than Orinda is paying and more than Moraga is paying.

What's the "right" price? \$17.4 million per year of Lafayette property taxes [7] go to ConFire for 9 firefighters in three stations plus ambulance service, a cost of \$1.9 million per firefighter. But ConFire is probably not building up the reserves MOFD is.

WHERE IS ORINDA's OVERFUNDING GOING?

The long range financial forecast [5] shows how Orinda's overfunding is utilized. Rows 2 and 3 allocate the revenue between Orinda and Moraga with the tax revenue as-contributed and the other revenue allocated 9/17th to Orinda and 8/17th to Moraga. Rows 5-17 allocates the expenses between the two cities. Most of the expenses by the 9:8 ratio, with the fire station renovation costs specially allocated.

The surplus (revenue [rows 1-3] minus expense [rows 22-24]) is calculated on rows 19-21. This shows that over the past six years (2020-2025) Orinda's surplus has fully funded MOFD's \$38 million increase in reserves, plus subsidizing Moraga's share of operating costs by \$5 million. And the projection over the next ten years (2026-2035) shows Orinda again fully funding the \$60 million increase in reserves AND subsidizing Moraga's operating expenses with another \$29 million.

CAN THIS PROBLEM BE SOLVED?

Yes.

Can Moraga pay for the service it desires? Yes.

1. Moraga's parcel tax can be increased to its maximum limit, generating an additional \$2 million per year; \$20 million over ten years.
2. Moraga's ambulance can be staffed with paramedics rather than firefighter-paramedics, saving \$1 million per year; \$10 million over ten years.

This would allow Moraga to fund its share of operating costs over the next ten years, making up the \$30 million shortfall in the long range financial forecast.

Can Orinda's \$90 million of overfunding over the next ten years be cured? Yes and No.

Most of the overfunding results from the 23% allocation of basic property taxes which cannot be reduced. A small amount comes from the \$600,000 per year in parcel tax, which could be suspended, or utilized in a productive manner.

MOFD could use the money to provide services Orinda needs, rather than increase reserves funded 100% by Orinda tax dollars.

The most pressing need is a wildfire prevention program that actually reduces the risk of wildfire rather than the current "plan" that dreams of 7,000 property owners reducing the risk on their own by being "educated" on how to do so with no government involvement in doing the work or ascertaining whether-or-not the work is really being done.

Wildfire prevention needs to be orchestrated by and managed by the government. It is a public-safety issue as important as having a viable police force, a working sanitary sewer

system, or providing safe roads. A viable wildfire prevention plan needs to identify where the wildfire risk exists (excess and dangerous vegetation), needs to mitigate that risk with public funds which already exist, and needs to continually monitor the reemergence of risk (just like road conditions are monitored periodically) and create and fund maintenance. The money is there and the expertise is out there to develop a viable program.

If MOFD will not do this, or Orinda is not convinced the district will create, execute, and perpetuate a viable program, then Orinda's representatives on the MOFD board need to transfer the excess funds to the city so that the city itself can create and execute a plan. There are ways to do this.

Between the \$90 million Orinda will be overfunding MOFD over the next ten years (averaging \$9 million per year), and the \$4 million a year generated by Orinda's measure R, there are plenty of funds, requiring no new taxes, to create a vibrant wildfire prevention program and maintain Orinda's road (all of its roads) and storm drain infrastructure.

MOFD RESERVES

If Moraga increases its funding of MOFD and its cost of services are reduced so that it is fully funding MOFD's cost to serve it, and Orinda's overfunding is utilized to provide services Orinda NEEDS, then MOFD's reserve levels will be frozen.

Not that the existing \$55 million in reserves is not a "respectable" amount that the City of Orinda and the Town of Moraga can only dream of.

But to increase that level would require Moraga to provide its fair share of reserve funding, not rely solely on Orinda, which would require additional funding from Moraga residents (probably not viable) or a further reduction in costs (two paramedic ambulances and a single paramedic fire engine response unit?).

SUMMARY

Solutions are available to bring MOFD's services back in line with how the district was intended to serve the residents of Orinda and Moraga: A partnership of "equals" with each community paying for, and receiving, the services required; no more; no less.

Footnotes

[1] [MOFD Property Tax Revenue Allocation History](#)

[2] [MOFD Voter Pamphlets \(June 1997\)](#)

[MOFD Budget 2025/26](#)

[3] Statement of Revenues & Expenses – [page 11](#)
[4] Reserve Balances – [page 13](#)

[5] [MOFD Long Range Financial Forecast](#)

[6] [MOFD Property Tax Revenue Sources](#)

7] [Lamorinda Property Tax Allocation Comparison](#)