

State of California Will Take Additional Property Tax Revenues

Although Proposition 1A, which restricts the taking of revenues from cities, counties, and special districts, was approved by the voters in California in the November election, last minute proposition changes by the legislature have led to a dramatic and negative impact on the Community Services District.

CSD is considered an enterprise district, since it charges fees for services, unlike police, hospital and library districts. At the last minute, transit, fire-protection, mosquito-

abatement and other special districts were added to the agencies exempted from property tax shifts.

This resulted in the State taking about 81% or \$311,000 (rather than the 40% or \$153,000 originally projected) of revenue from the CSD for two years. The District will receive only about \$80,000 to \$100,00 per year for this period.

In order to meet the projected budget for the year without raising rates or reducing staff levels (which would result in reduced service), the Board of Directors has authorized suspension of monthly contributions to the replacement reserve program during this interim period, which amounts to approximately \$30,000 per month. This action will cover the projected loss. Staff has pledged to monitor expenses carefully and encourage cost-savings wherever possible. In addition, during the upcoming budget preparations, the board and staff will review the potential for a temporary rate surcharge to cover the lost revenue to reduce the impact on the replacement reserve program.

District On Course To Be Solid Waste Service Provider

If the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors consents, the Rancho Murieta Community Services District will contract with the lowest responsible bidder, currently the California Waste Recovery Systems (CWRS), to provide solid waste collection services. After approximately two years of investigation and negotiation, the CSD Board has determined that the customers at Rancho Murieta will be better served if the District, rather than Sacramento County, collects and disposes of waste.

The County has recently lost waste collection services for the cities of Elk Grove, Citrus Heights and Rancho Cordova, and they are reluctant to lose Rancho Murieta as well. Although invited to bid, the County declined, stating they would not bid against themselves. The County is required to

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Solar Bees Save Energy

Did you know we have solar bees buzzing year round at Rancho Murieta? It's true. The District has these energetic stainless steel mixers powered by the sun located in the five initial treatment ponds at the wastewater plant. These solar bees complement the aerators to mix oxygen in the treatment ponds to break down bacteria as a necessary part of the wastewater process. The action resulting from the stirring motion mimics stream flow and discourages algae growth.

Prior to adding the solar bees, aerators alone moved the pond water to add oxygen and eliminate odors, but electrical costs to run the aerators were very high. Through a grant from SMUD, the District was

able to help offset the \$35,000 - \$39,000 cost for each of the bees and cut back 25 to 30% of the run time for the aerators. The bees are expected to last 10 to 15 years and are

virtually maintenance free. Solar energy plays a significant role in the wastewater treatment process,



This solar bee increases efficiency and lowers the cost of running the aerators at the wastewater plant.

saving ratepayers money and conserving energy.

Technology Master Plan Update

Comsys (formerly Venturi Technology Partners) recently interviewed CSD Directors and staff to discover what they envision CSD's future technology to look like. After compiling this data, Comsys surveyed all District owned equipment and software to analyze what the District currently has and what it should have to accomplish its goals. They are also reviewing the District's network and wireless security.

As an example, one of the reachable goals is to have a fixed base system which can read water meters electronically for monthly billing, saving man hours and improving cost-effectiveness.

Another is a graphical information system (GIS) that would contain all information on the computer pertaining to a particular location, which could be accessed by authorized personnel on a point and click basis. Information would include all water, sewer, drainage, and security services relating to a particular location or lot. In-ground pipeline and other utility information would be readily available.

The District is also working towards providing a wireless system to communicate among customers and staff, as well as a SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) system to im-

prove the efficiency of off-site plant operators.

Patrol Officers in the field would have access via laptop computers to respond to emergency requests, as well as service requests, check guest information, variance approvals, and complaints, among other services.

The technology master plan, which is due for completion in March 2005, will provide the tools for the District to be proactive rather than reactive in meeting the municipal needs of the community, including cost savings and time management. The plan will provide optional projects with budget numbers to be explored in the near future.

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provide services to the unincorporated area, so negotiations to detach have been complicated and lengthy.

The primary reason for detachment is to save residents approximately \$4.00 per month in fees (for 64 gallon size containers), including some fixed charges, which the County will continue. The District will also receive an ongoing franchise fee from CWRS and will use these funds to help keep the rates as stable as possible for the life of the contract. County rates have steadily risen over the last few years, and no doubt will continue to rise. The proposed contract includes an annual review of rates, based on a detailed formula, which could result in future increased charges.

Two years ago, the CSD took a community survey regarding solid waste collection. The results indicated there was an overwhelming consensus that cost is the most important factor to the District's ratepayers. Customers went on to say they would like the same services they currently have for a lower price, rather than increasing the cost to obtain more services.

In addition, the new possible

provider, California Waste Recovery Systems, will include additional services, such as unlimited bagged leaf collection during the fall months, E-waste collection, used oil collection, and four on-call trash pickups per year per household. The County provides only one special pickup per year on a regular schedule.

Additionally, the new containers for garbage, green waste, and recyclables are narrower than County containers, thus fitting into smaller storage spaces. New trucks will be provided by CWRS for the Rancho Murieta collections, and pickup will be during the week, rather than on Mondays or Fridays, which has resulted in cans being left on the street when residents travel on weekends.

The District will include the waste collection billing on their monthly statements. The target date to begin services is July 1, 2005, the start of the fiscal year.

CSD Planning Workshop

The annual goal planning workshop of CSD Directors and staff will be held January 12, 2005 from 8:00 a.m. to noon at the CSD office. This year's workshop will focus on water related issues, such as water rights, supply, treatment, wastewater treatment, recycling, and conservation. As the District's infrastructure ages, there are ongoing increased maintenance costs, particularly for emergency repairs. Being able to anticipate replacements at a scheduled pace is high on the priority list of capital improvements. Through careful planning, reserves have been established to accomplish replacement as needed.

Safety Center Coming Soon

The James L. Noller Safety Center is expected to be open for business by the end of January. The CSD Security Department will be headquartered in the new facility, located adjacent to the CSD Administration Building at 15160 Jackson Road. The facilities provide privacy for customers, avoiding the interruptions which occurred at the gates.



A view of the new Safety Center adjacent to the CSD office.

The California Highway Patrol and the Sacramento County Sheriff's Deputies also have offices in the center, as well as the Volunteers in Partnership with the Sheriff (VIPS). These VIPS, trained by the Sheriff's Department, are local residents who assist in report writing, vacation checks and other matters. Additional volunteers are needed – contact Dena Law at (916) 717-2260 for information.

A springtime dedication ceremony for the Safety Center will be announced at a future date.

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Greg Remson Promoted To Interim Security Chief

Greg Remson knows Rancho Murieta like the back of his hand – after all, he has worked here since 1982! He was originally hired as a Patrol Officer by the Rancho Murieta Association, but when the Community Services District became responsible for security in 1984, he was hired by the District. With the recent retirement of long-time Security Chief Jim Noller, Greg was a natural for promotion to Interim Chief.

For many years, Greg worked the graveyard or swing shift primarily so he could assist his wife, Sheri, to care for their young son, Jack. Jack is now a freshman at Sacramento City College and is interested in studying journalism. Sheri

works in the human resources department of an e-commerce company in Folsom.

Greg has been a Sergeant in the reserves of the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department since 1985. The reserves serve a minimum number of hours each month by providing assistance at high school football games, dances, backup for regular deputies, or wherever they can be of service.

During his years of service, he has seen population growth — “there is still a good community feel, but Rancho Murieta is moving more towards being a city – more people, more business, more problems, but they're the small town variety.”



Greg observes about the Security staff, “I have a great crew. We have five patrol officers and all but one are Academy trained. Most of the officers have law enforcement experience. One is a Reserve Officer with the Jackson Police Department, which means training and experience are provided at no cost to the Rancho Murieta CSD. There are nine Gate Officers whose jobs are more demanding than most people realize.”