

October 14, 2009  
Agenda Item 14d

## West County Wastewater District: One special district's compliance and reporting success

By Maria Sena, West County Wastewater District

**Founded** in 1921, the West County Wastewater District (WCWD) in Richmond, California, provides sewage collection, treatment and disposal services for over 120,000 ratepayers in nearby cities as well as some of the unincorporated parts of West Contra Costa County.

With the knowledge and experience of its management and workforce, consisting of 53 employees (with an average of 11 years of service) and the visionary leadership of its five member board of directors (totaling 85 years of service on the board), WCWD has been able to efficiently promote environmental responsibility, responsible fiscal management, and responsive customer service while ensuring fair rates and charges.

In recognition of these efforts the West County Wastewater District (WCWD) has recently received the following awards:

**Platinum Peak Performance Award from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA):** This award is the highest given by NACWA in recognizing public wastewater treatment facilities for their outstanding performance and ongoing compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements. To achieve this award the WCWD has maintained an outstanding compliance record for six consecutive years.



**2009 Outstanding Capital Improvement Project Award from the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA):** This award presented by CASA recognized West County Wastewater District for extending its environmental stewardship by bringing clean renewable solar power into its operations. In a joint effort with Solar Power Partners, Inc. and Premier Power Renewable Energy, the district had a 1.1 MW dual axis solar facility installed at its Water Pollution Control Plant (the largest solar power project of its kind in the United States). This project was completed and running in December 2008 at no cost to its ratepayers. Designed to produce 35 percent of WCWD's electrical power needs, the power saved compares to the annual electricity needs of 3,654 California homes. This would be like parking 257 passenger vehicles for a whole year, avoiding the yearly CO2 emissions from using more than 3,265 barrels of oil or from consuming 159,353 gallons of gasoline.

"Protecting the environment is always at the forefront of WCWD's efforts and a foremost concern of our board of directors and our employees. It is our goal to continue to protect and preserve the health of the community while maintaining the lowest rates possible," said George Schmidt, WCWD Board President.

# Innovations

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Do you have a new program, process or facility that increases efficiency, reduces costs, improves service or otherwise helps make your community a better place to live? *California Special District* wants to know about it! Contact Nicole Dunn at [nicoled@csda.net](mailto:nicoled@csda.net) or (877) 924-2732.



### 2008 Innovation Award from the California Association of Sanitation Agencies:

This award was given to acknowledge West County Wastewater District as well as thirteen other East Bay water and wastewater agencies for contracting with Solano Community College, Fairfield to bring operator training classes to Contra Costa County. The Water/Wastewater Operator Training program offers free, college-level training to potential water and wastewater plant operators, a field in which retirements are expected to halve the existing workforce within seven to ten years. WCWD not only financially supports this program; it offers its facilities to hold the classes and has the district's general manager volunteer as an instructor.

Being a special district, West County Wastewater District is able to focus on its mission to provide wastewater collection in the best practicable and reliable manner possible and to provide reliable high quality wastewater treatment prior to reuse or discharge to San Francisco Bay while

protecting the health of the community.

"The success of the West County Wastewater District is due to the leadership, vision and focus of its board of directors, knowledgeable and dedicated workforce and its progressive programs such as the building sewer lateral replacement grants, comprehensive capital improvement and preventative maintenance programs and long range planning and budgeting," said E.J. Shalaby, WCWD general manager. "WCWD provides an important service to the community, but for the board of directors, managers and employees of WCWD, it's more than that – its mission is to help protect our precious resources and environment."

For additional information please contact West County Wastewater District at (510) 222-6700 or [www.wcwd.org](http://www.wcwd.org).

### Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting:

As a public agency WCWD has a fiscal responsibility to keep its financial records accurate, up-to-date and to file a yearly audit report. WCWD goes a step further and prepares a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). Designed to be transparent and easily understood, the CAFR explains the district's financial program, as well as a financial outlook for the next year and such features as a brief history of WCWD, an organizational chart, a 10-year financial history and other miscellaneous statistics and facts. WCWD has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for its CAFR every year since 1998. The national award is the top honor bestowed by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada.

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## San Ramon, Danville told to wait for Tassajara Valley planning decision

The commission's staff had recommended taking a quarry out of Clayton's area and also had suggested taking the former Concord Naval Weapons Station land out of Concord's control.

By Rick Radin  
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 09/09/2009 05:33:48 PM PDT

MARTINEZ — Danville and San Ramon will wait to resolve their competition to control development in the Tassajara Valley as an agency decided today to help them negotiate the dispute.

At issue is each city's sphere of influence, the area marked for annexation. The designation gives a city limited authority over development before annexation. Both want the Tassajara Valley.

First, the Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission this afternoon rejected San Ramon's request that Tassajara immediately go into its sphere of influence. The commission's staff had recommended rejection and Danville had sought more discussion and negotiation.

Both communities have cast covetous eyes on the Tassajara Valley, which is east of San Ramon and south and east of Danville, for housing development.

"We definitely pledge to pursue this sooner than later," said commission Chairwoman Gayle Uilkema, in assuring San Ramon that its plea for urgency won't be ignored. "We need to sit down and talk it through."

In other action, the commission granted Clayton and Concord's requests to retain their present spheres of influence.

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## Neighbors: Why does Alamo need a new \$5 million fire station?

Sophia Kazmi  
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 09/13/2009 12:00:00 AM PDT

Updated: 09/13/2009 04:04:12 AM PDT

But plans for the 9,000-square-foot place has some neighbors upset because it's not a house that is planned but a fire station.

The San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District is looking to replace Fire Station 32, which is old and small, with a new station at a new, busier location at Stone Valley Road and Miranda Avenue. The project awaits approval by Contra Costa County.

The plan has some neighbors upset because the new station — which would be built about one-third of a mile from the existing station — would be close to their homes.

"Would you like to buy your dream home near a fire station? We did," neighbor Dan Haller said angrily.

He and other neighbors are also concerned about traffic and question the need to spend \$5 million for a station that averages two calls a day.

San Ramon Valley Fire Chief Richard Price said the proposed site is more centrally located than the current site on Stone Valley Road at Austin Lane and is geologically safer. The district did consider building on the original site, Price said, but when the opportunity to purchase this land came up, the district took it.

As for the current firehouse, where six firefighters stay overnight: "It's just a house with a big garage," Price said. The kitchen has a six-burner stove top, a 6-by-9-foot cooking island and room for three refrigerators. There's a place for a flat-screen TV, but Price said the district hasn't decided what TV will go in the firehouse.

Price said a more centrally located facility would overall help the 17,000 people who live in the community.

"We feel like we're doing the right thing for Alamo, putting in a modern facility," Price said.

Station 32 at its current location gets about two service calls a day. The district's busiest station, No. 31 in Danville, averages approximately four calls a day.

One neighbor of the proposed station questioned if spending \$5 million on a new station is necessary.

"Is it really worth it?" Lydia Huang asked the fire chief at a meeting Wednesday of the Alamo Improvement Association.

Recently constructed firehouses in Pleasanton and Dublin also have a bedroom for each firefighter. The two recently built stations, which each cost about \$5 million, also have three refrigerators, one for each shift, said Dave Rocha, deputy chief of Alameda County Fire, which provides fire services for the city of Dublin. They also have exercise rooms.

The three stations in Dublin get a total of about 2,000 calls a year, Rocha said, which is an average of about two calls a day per station.

Livermore-Pleasanton Fire's most recently constructed station, No. 4, on Bernal Avenue in Pleasanton cost about \$3.2 million and is about

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# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

7,500 square feet, including the bay where firetrucks are parked. The station, which gets about three calls a day, also has one bedroom for each of the firefighters stationed there overnight, an exercise room and shop area to do vehicle repair, said Livermore Pleasanton Battalion Chief Barry Rose.

The Alamo Improvement Association's planning committee has been reviewing San Ramon Valley station plans for the last two months. At its public meetings many have asked about traffic issues — particularly how fire engines will get on Miranda Avenue and out to Stone Valley Road if firefighters get an emergency call during the school rush, when traffic is often at a standstill.

At Wednesday's meeting, the planning committee members asked the district-hired architects for renderings of what the station would look like to someone driving by. The committee ultimately will give a recommendation to Contra Costa County on the project.

The firehouse will be discussed again at the committee's Oct. 14 meeting.

Reach Sophia Kazmi at 925-847-2122. Follow her at [twitter.com/sophiakazmi](http://twitter.com/sophiakazmi).

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September 15, 2009

## Alamo woman selected for LAFCO

### *Sharon Burke to fill alternate position on planning entity*

by **Geoff Gillette**

Residents in the southern part of Contra Costa County have an additional voice representing their interests, as Alamo resident Sharon Burke was named last week to fill a vacant position on the Contra Costa Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

Burke, who has long been heavily involved in Alamo and was a founder of the incorporation movement, was voted in to serve as an alternate to the group. Her list of accomplishments includes being a member of the League of Women Voters, heading the Children's Hospital Auxiliary and serving in PTA offices in local schools.

At their meeting Sept. 9, members of the commission looked over the applications of four finalists. A total of 12 Contra Costa County residents expressed an interest in filling the role, as an alternate to commission member Martin McNair.

LAFCO is a seven-member board charged with regulatory and planning duties throughout the county. The commission membership is made up of individuals from the Board of Supervisors, city councils, special districts and from the community at large.

Each of these membership categories also has an appointed representative to serve as an alternate if the member is unable to attend. Alternates are able to attend meetings and participate in the discussion of agenda items, but unless they are filling in for their board member they are unable to vote.

Burke was unable to attend the Sept. 9 meeting due to a family emergency that took her out of town. However, she provided the commission with a statement regarding her interest in LAFCO and her reasons for seeking out the position.

"As currently constituted, Contra Costa LAFCO does not have a resident of South County as a member or alternate on the Commission and has not had one for years," she stated. "I believe I would bring an additional point of view to LAFCO to represent a currently under-represented area of the county."

A subcommittee went through the applications and narrowed it down to four. The subcommittee recommended the full commission choose Burke both for the strong qualities she would bring to the role but also for

representation of the southern end of the county.

District 3 Supervisor Mary N. Piepho, herself an alternate on the commission, endorsed the choice of Burke for the position.

"It's obvious we have a wealth of talented individuals," Piepho said. "I think it's important to recognize a geographic balance. We are missing a representative for the southern portion of the county. Sharon's nomination would fill that gap."

Commissioners moved to pass the recommendation and were ready to vote when Commissioner Helen Allen intervened.

"At this time while I hear there is a motion to support, I have my own ideas," she offered.

Allen said she felt she was not given enough information on the candidates and requested that in future discussions they be given all of the applications. She then moved that rather than simply approve Burke, the commission vote on the finalists and let the candidate with the most votes become the alternate.

When no other commissioners seconded Allen's amendment it died and the commission voted 6-1 in favor of Burke.

A statement released by LAFCO read: "Ms. Burke has demonstrated a commitment to the community through her many years of involvement in community organizations."

Officials say Burke will be sworn in at the Oct. 14 meeting. Her term expires May 2012.

## Greenbelt Alliance wins suit against Oakley

By Jonathan Lockett  
CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Posted: 10/02/2009 04:07:33 PM PDT

Updated: 10/02/2009 04:07:34 PM PDT

A Contra Costa Superior Court judge ruled Friday against Oakley in a case brought by the Greenbelt Alliance to protect farmland in the city's East Cypress Corridor, according to a news release from the Greenbelt Alliance.

Oakley must now re-evaluate its environmental impact report for a second time to show how it will offset the loss of 828 acres of farmland in the Hotchkiss Tract. The city also had show revisions in air quality remedies in court, which the judge accepted, according to City Manager Bryan Montgomery.

"This is a huge victory for the Bay Area and the state, because cities will have to protect farmland," said Christina Wong, Greenbelt Alliance Field Representative, in a news release.

"We're certainly disappointed," Montgomery said, "but we just need to move forward and do what needs to be done to comply."

Montgomery said the land, although containing livestock, is not used for farming and has never been. "It's just open space," he said.

The organization sued the city in 2006 for failing to address 10 environmental impacts of development on more than 1,600 acres of land along East Cypress Road. The developments would add up to

5,600 houses and apartments in an area that is below sea level.

In 2007, a judge ruled in favor of Oakley on eight of the environmental issues but ordered the city to address issues with air quality and loss of agricultural land. Friday's ruling means the city will have to make its third revision to the environmental plan paid for by developers.

**Jonathan Lockett covers Oakley. Reach him at 925-779-7174.**

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