

## Hercules confirms plans to bolt joint wastewater venture with Pinole

By Tom Lochner  
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 03/11/2010 12:38:47 PM PST

Updated: 03/11/2010 12:38:47 PM PST

Hercules plans to switch its sewage flow from the joint Pinole/Hercules treatment plant to the West County Wastewater District's plant in Richmond, confirming what had been an open secret.

Hercules City Manager Nelson Oliva announced his city's intentions this week at a board meeting of the two cities' wastewater joint powers agency, almost a month after Hercules' self-imposed mid-February deadline. But at the March 2 Pinole City Council meeting, Pinole City Manager Belinda Espinosa said, "I already know that Hercules is going to West County."

Hercules had telegraphed its intention in April 2009 on its Web site and in a brochure it sent to residents announcing that redirecting the city's wastewater flow to West County is "the most viable option" to handle its future growth, expected to add almost 10,000 residents by 2030; Hercules' population is about 24,500 today.

Within the next few weeks, Oliva said he will recommend such a move to his City Council for approval. He suggested to Pinole officials that they consider conveying their sewage to West County also and decommissioning the existing plant, thus freeing prime Pinole waterfront land for other uses.

Pinole officials said last week that after five years of study at a cost of about a half-million dollars -- paid jointly by the two cities -- all engineering studies to date show that the most cost-effective solution for Hercules' and Pinole's long-term wastewater treatment needs is to convey the sewage to an upgraded Pinole/Hercules plant.

Hercules officials, however, had questioned the ability of the joint plant to accommodate the future flow of their growing city, notwithstanding Pinole officials' assurances that there is enough future capacity for Hercules' anticipated growth.

Pinole officials expressed bafflement over Hercules' apparent preference for a West County solution, given what appeared to be the cost disadvantage of such a move. According to a draft environmental report, necessary upgrades to the existing plant would cost about \$41 million, to be split evenly between the two cities. Different studies under discussion last year estimated that a move to West County would cost Hercules \$59 million or \$73 million.

"I'm curious. I'm an engineer," Pinole Public Works Director Dean Allison told his council last week. "I want to know, have we missed something? Is there something out there we're not seeing?"

To resolve that question, Pinole officials said they want to talk some more to West County Wastewater officials about the possibility of a Pinole move to West County and have a new engineering firm study the cost. Officials of both cities agreed Wednesday that there should be three-way talks.

West County Wastewater District general manager E. J. Shalaby could not be reached.

Advertisement



**IF YOU'RE NOT PRINTING ON A KODAK ESP ALL-IN-ONE PRINTER, CHANCES ARE YOU'RE PAYING TOO MUCH FOR INK.**

FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU'RE OVERPAYING FOR INK AT [PRINTANDPROSPER.COM](http://PRINTANDPROSPER.COM)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

Still undetermined are the potential construction costs, and the paths, of sewers to carry the wastewater from Hercules and Pinole -- or from Hercules only, through Pinole -- to West County Wastewater's plant. Oliva said Wednesday that he believes an agreement is possible with the Union Pacific Railroad to lay sewer pipe along its right of way.

Also still undetermined are potential buy-in costs into West County, to pay for any necessary expansion of that district's plant capacity; the legal structure of any arrangements with West County; and the monthly rates that residents would have to be charged. Pinole officials said a relationship with West County likely would be contractual rather than an annexation of one or both cities into the wastewater district.

Pinole officials noted they will have to negotiate with the Regional Water Quality Control Board to adjust the deadlines for various phases of a board-mandated upgrade to the existing plant. The environmental impact report is on track to be completed in August, but there are other deadlines between now and 2016. A water board spokesman said Wednesday that he would forward a request for comment to the agency's management, which did not respond.

Espinosa said Pinole also must figure out whether it can operate the existing plant more cheaply by itself if Hercules leaves, which would mean a reduced scope of upgrades to the plant, but also full rather than shared responsibility for operations, if Pinole does not choose the West County option.

Contact Tom Lochner at 510-262-2760.

Advertisement



**Florida Tech**  
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

**Bring the Classroom to Your Home  
With a Degree Online From Florida Tech**

**APPLY TODAY!**  
FloridaTechOnline.com/FD | 1-888-253-5946



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

## Debate heats up over Brentwood urban limit line measure

By Rowena Coetsee  
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 04/06/2010 12:32:12 PM PDT

Updated: 04/06/2010 05:24:17 PM PDT

BRENTWOOD — Open-space advocates recently went head to head in a freewheeling debate with those who want the option to develop a swath of land just west of the city.

Emotion sometimes overshadowed the facts as speakers contradicted each other and traded jabs during last week's panel discussion of Measure F, an initiative on the June ballot that would establish Brentwood's own urban limit line.

The more expansive boundary would incorporate 740 acres currently outside the countywide line that limits urban sprawl.

Once the land is within the urban limit, the city can petition to annex the area, clearing the way for developers to build as many as 1,300 homes as well as shops and other commercial structures.

Seth Adams of the nonprofit environmental group Save Mount Diablo argued that the initiative — which includes an agreement with potential developers spelling out the number and density of homes as well as the extent of commercial development planned — would leave little room for the public to decide what that area should look like.

"What they're really saying is approve Measure F and give up control," he said.

But Measure F proponent Tom Koch argued that Brentwood residents would acquire more control — albeit a different kind — if they establish their own urban limit line.

Brentwood voters alone can decide to expand or contract an urban limit line that they've set up, he said, whereas it takes a countywide vote to alter the county's boundary.

Brentwood resident Kathy Griffin reiterated the negative effects she believes construction would have on the surrounding area.

Building additional homes would further suppress housing prices, she said, adding that the city already has 4,153 homes in the pipeline that developers can start building as soon as they receive a building permit.

The combination of single- and multifamily units — the latter could be condominiums and townhouses as well as apartments — represents a significant influx of people, causing schools to become more crowded and the tangle of traffic on Balfour Road and American Avenue to get even worse, Griffin said.

She and others also question the wisdom of including commercial projects when there's already a noticeable number of vacant buildings around town.

As of mid-February, the city had just over 1 million square feet of retail and office projects either awaiting approval, ready to build or under construction.

Advertisement

**Kodak**

IF YOU'RE NOT PRINTING ON A KODAK ESP ALL-IN-ONE PRINTER, CHANCES ARE  
**YOU'RE PAYING TOO MUCH FOR INK.**

FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU'RE OVERPAYING FOR INK AT [PRINTANDPROSPER.COM](http://PRINTANDPROSPER.COM)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

But Koch dismissed what he called Griffin's "sky-is-falling" predictions, pointing to Antioch's Roddy Ranch project as an example of similar fears failing to materialize. Five years after voters there adopted an urban limit line that brought the project site under the city's control, not one of the 700 homes planned has been built.

"The argument that everything will come crashing down — it wasn't true then," Koch said.

He emphasized that even if Brentwood ultimately annexes the land, the lengthy approval process that projects go through, involving more than a half-dozen state and local agencies, means it would be years before construction would start — and that's assuming the economy has improved enough to lessen the financial risk.

According to the city's estimates, the soonest a developer could break ground would be about two years after the election.

As for vehicles backing up on and around American Avenue because of the two schools there, they say that the agreement would require builders to bankroll a potential solution to the problem.

Extending American Avenue and widening the stretch of Balfour Road between Balfour-Guthrie Park and Deer Valley Road to four lanes would cost roughly \$27.4 million, all of which the city would exact in developer fees as a condition of approving projects.

**Contact Rowena Coetsee at 925-779-7141.**

Advertisement



**\$25  
off**

## Tax Preparation

Simply present this offer to your Jackson Hewitt® tax preparer and **SAVE \$25** on income tax preparation!

Offer valid on tax preparation fees only. Does not apply to financial products, online tax preparation product or other services. Present coupon at time of tax preparation. Valid at participating locations only and may not be combined with other offers. Most offices independently owned and operated.

EXPIRES 4/30/10. COUPON CODE: **2QELU**

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

## Future of joint Pinole-Hercules wastewater plant remains in limbo

By Tom Lochner  
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 04/06/2010 03:39:00 PM PDT

Updated: 04/06/2010 05:22:48 PM PDT

A draft environmental report for tens of millions of dollars of upgrades to the Pinole-Hercules wastewater treatment plant is available for review and public comment, at a time when the future of the plant is in limbo.

Pinole will hold a public hearing on the report Wednesday at City Hall; a 45-day public comment period ends April 28.

Last month, Hercules confirmed it wants to reroute its sewage flow from the joint Pinole/Hercules treatment plant to the West County Wastewater District's plant in North Richmond. Pinole officials recently said they might want to follow Hercules' lead, but by then the environmental report was almost complete.

Hercules' decision came after five years of study at a cost of about a half-million dollars, shared by the two cities.

Over the years, Hercules officials had expressed doubts that the joint plant, even with upgrades, could accommodate their city's future growth, estimated at about 10,000 additional residents over the next 20 or 25 years.

The plant is on the Pinole waterfront near the Hercules city line.

Pinole had applied to the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board for a permit to increase daily wet-weather flow capacity from 10.3 million gallons per day to 14.59 million, with a maximum wet-weather capacity of 20 mgd. Dry-weather treatment capacity would remain at 4.06 mgd, the current permitted amount, although for practical reasons the actual capacity currently is less.

The report examines two basic scenarios, the first appears to be moot: Hercules staying with Pinole, which would involve extensive upgrades to the existing plant and building a larger effluent pipe to Rodeo, where the treated wastewater enters San Pablo Bay through an outfall pipe; and Hercules rerouting its flow to West County, leaving Pinole alone to operate the plant, which would require a lesser degree of upgrading.

The first scenario would require relocating the Pinole Corporation Yard that is adjacent to the plant; the second would require construction of a 450,000-gallon concrete storage tank to temporarily hold water that flows in during hard rains.

West County Wastewater District General Manager E. J. Shalaby said his board was receptive to a feasibility study conducted by the two cities in 2008.

"For the last 30 years, our board has been very open to regionalization," Shalaby said. An effort to regionalize in the 1970s fell apart after Pinole decided to build its own plant, Shalaby said, and Hercules subsequently dropped out also.

Advertisement

**Kodak**

IF YOU'RE NOT PRINTING ON A KODAK ESP ALL-IN-ONE PRINTER, CHANCES ARE  
**YOU'RE PAYING TOO MUCH FOR INK.**

FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU'RE OVERPAYING FOR INK AT [PRINTANDPROSPER.COM](http://PRINTANDPROSPER.COM)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

The West County board has commissioned a study of potential future rates that is expected to be completed in May, Shalaby said.

Lila Tang, chief of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System wastewater control program for the Regional Water Quality Control Board, said that in view of Hercules' recent decision, her agency "would likely provide a reasonable amount of time for Pinole to evaluate its options and develop a revised scope of work going forward. ... I think at least nine to 12 months."

Contact Tom Lochner at 510-262-2760.

if you go What: Public hearing on a draft environmental impact report for the Pinole-Hercules water pollution control plant improvement project  
When: 6 tonight Where: City Council chamber, Pinole City Hall, 2131 Pear St., Pinole details: The draft report is available at Pinole City Hall, 2131 Pear St.; the Hercules Library, 109 Civic Drive; and the Pinole Library, 2935 Pinole Valley Road

Advertisement



**\$25  
off**

## Tax Preparation

Simply present this offer to your Jackson Hewitt® tax preparer and **SAVE \$25** on income tax preparation!

Offer valid on tax preparation fees only. Does not apply to financial products, online tax preparation product or other services. Present coupon at time of tax preparation. Valid at participating locations only and may not be combined with other offers. Most offices independently owned and operated.

EXPIRES 4/30/10. COUPON CODE: **2QELU**

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™