

RIVER VALLEY TIMES

41ST YEAR • ISSUE 1

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JANUARY 10, 2025

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Financial Outlook for RMCC Dims



Rancho Murieta Country Club requires a multimillion-dollar investment to restore financial viability. File photo by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Rancho Murieta Country Club Board President and acting General Manager Eric Dutton delivered sobering news about the club's viability in his most recent update emailed to members on Dec. 31.

While the board intends to keep the club operational in 2025 and is exploring

options for the remaining three years of its lease to facilitate a sale, a prominent golf management company has concluded that the club is in a "death spiral."

Dutton described 2024 as an unprecedented year.

"The deal between RMP and a prospective buyer of the club fell through, we did not file for bankruptcy as expected, and we managed to remain operational and profitable the entire

year," he wrote.

Although the board plans to continue operating the club in 2025, reductions in services or staff will be unavoidable without a dues increase exceeding 5%. Strategies to address the financial shortfall will be discussed at the next board meeting at 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 30.

The club operates under a somewhat unusual arrangement, as it does not own the golf courses

or clubhouse. The lease is set to expire on Oct. 31, 2028. The property is owned by Rancho Murieta Properties (RMP), with Carol Anderson Ward serving as the primary investor and attorney Greg Dyer acting as the chief operating officer.

The rest of Dutton's email made it evident that the club's prospects for achieving financial viability are extremely slim.

Continued on page 7

Serious Rift Surfaces at CSD Board Meeting



By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The governance of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District may be at a turning point, as evidenced by a special board meeting held on Jan. 6.

The meeting agenda suggested that the board might consider disciplining or dismissing General Manager Mimi Morris during the closed session. Although nothing happened, it revealed a worrying rift that began months ago between Morris and new Board President Stephen Booth.

Before the board withdrew for the closed session, Morris read a prepared statement.

"Today's special, closed session appears to result, not from any alleged deficiencies in my performance but rather from President Booth's ongoing retaliation, discrimination, and harassment," Morris said.

Booth didn't attend the closed meeting as a direct result of instructions provided by District Counsel Patrick Enright.

Booth was asked to respond and stated, "I categorically deny that there has been any discrimination against her for any reason."

When the board reconvened in public session, Enright announced that no action had been taken. The board will hold its next meeting at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 15.

Due to deadline constraints, the River Valley Times is unable to provide more details about the special meeting in this printed edition. However, full coverage can be found at www.therivervalleytimes.com. ★



Mimi Morris has been CSD general manager since May 2023. Photo by Gail Bullen

Murieta Dance Explores 'Haunted Mansion'



Five famous characters are drawn together by a mysterious invitation to a haunted mansion as the Murieta Dance Company presents its annual recital at Murieta Plaza on Dec. 14 and 15. Photo by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - With a cast of 115 dancers ranging in age from 2 to 17, the Murieta Dance Company transformed an empty supermarket into a spooky haunted mansion on Dec. 14 and 15.

The performances drew an

audience of 450 on Saturday and 420 on Sunday, marking the grand finale of the dance company's 12th year in operation.

The young dancers showcased their talents in tap, jazz, ballet, hip-hop, contemporary dance, lyrical dance, acrobatics, acting, voice and musical theater during the vibrant production of "Haunted Mansion."

Artistic Director Doreen Zimmermann crafted the original script, featuring 14 characters and seamlessly blending 40 songs from a wide array of artists, including Andrew Lloyd Webber and Miley Cyrus.

In the storyline, the ghosts of El Rancho Manor have been trapped

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Barcode Sticker Fees to Fund 24/7/365 Patrol

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- Increased barcode sticker fees and a reinstatement of 24/7/365 patrols were different sides of the same coin when the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board discussed both at its Dec. 18 meeting.

Director of Finance and Administration Mark Matulich told the board that the Security Department is expected to resume 24/7/365 patrols starting Jan. 5, staffed by four community services officers and an administrative sergeant. Despite reduced security funding in the current and previous fiscal year budgets, CSD has maintained full coverage at both gates.

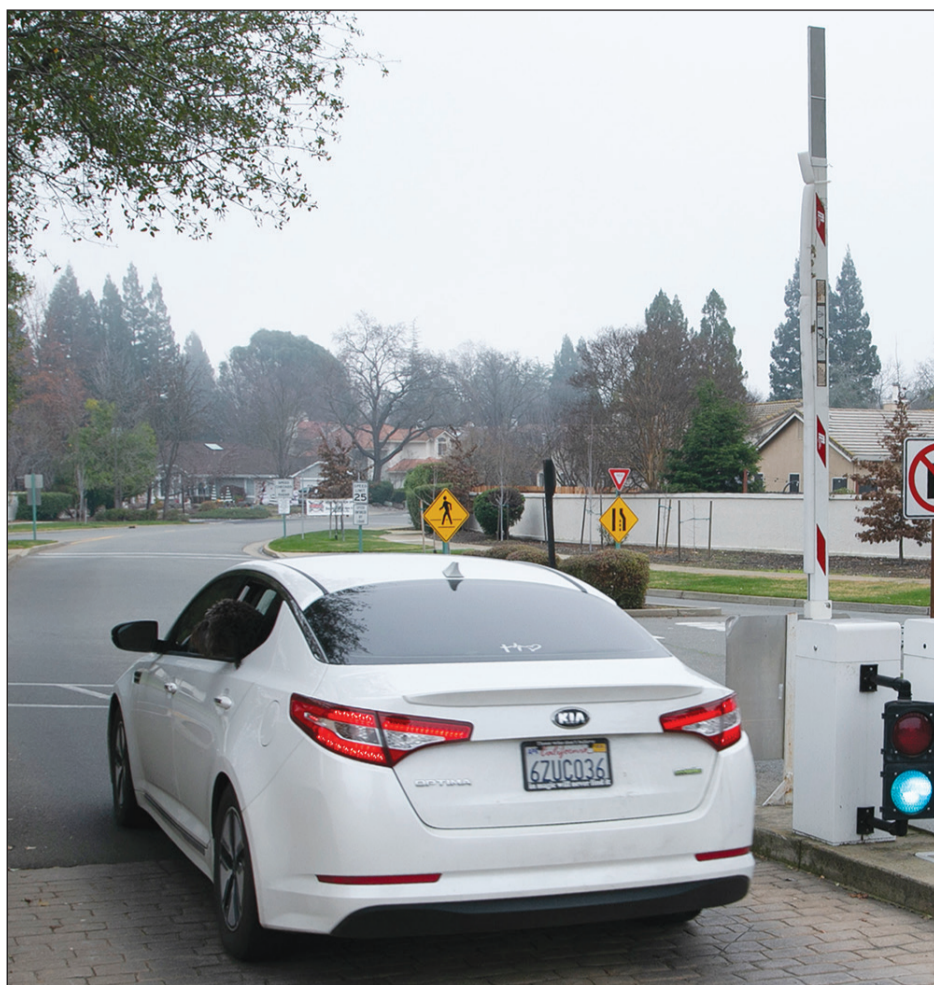
However, full patrol funding relied on an increase in barcode sticker fees, which Matulich proposed as part of an amended security budget at the November meeting. The one-time fee for a new car would rise from \$10 to \$25, and a \$10 annual renewal fee per car would be added.

Although the board approved the amended security budget in November to include additional income from barcode fees to fund another security position, implementing the fees required a two-step ordinance adoption process at the December and January meetings.

Following the November meeting, the district published a public hearing notice regarding the barcode fee increase, prompting some residents to voice their objections on social media. In response, Director Stephen Booth explained the board's rationale for the increase in a Dec. 6 post on Nextdoor. Acknowledging the significant opposition, Booth stated he would request that the ordinance be tabled until budget discussions.

By the end of the board's discussion about the ordinance on Dec. 18, both Booth and Director Linda Butler, who had initially moved to table it, reconsidered their stance. Booth proposed that district staff create a supplemental information sheet to accompany the bills and be included in the Pipeline newsletter, providing a clearer explanation of the new fee, its purpose and how the revenue would be utilized.

Booth and Butler joined the other board members in approving the first reading of the ordinance, believing there was sufficient time to communicate with



Gate arms swing up as a car passes a barcode scanner at the South Gate. Photo by Gail Bullen

the public before the final decision.

Booth noted that the board would revisit the ordinance at its Jan. 15 meeting.

"If those communications aren't completed, we can vote it down at that point, although hopefully that won't be necessary," he said.

The board discussed many other items at the four-hour meeting. The highlights included a presentation of petitions requesting a water moratorium, another presentation listing the district's biggest accomplishments in the past year and a report about reaching a settlement with Sacramento County over violations related to use of chlorine gas. See the separate story in this issue.

Security Update

Matulich informed the board that during the November vote to amend the security budget, they also discussed upcoming changes, including the return to full coverage.

"I just want to report that we have two current patrol officers, who will slot in as community service officers under our new model, and we have two former gate officers who have accepted positions as community service officers," he said. "Right now, they're completing their training...to be out on patrol."

Matulich projected that as of Jan. 5, the district would have four people on patrol, working shifts that enable a return to full coverage. This would include the administrative sergeant, who will "handle day-to-day administration of the department, filling any

gaps, providing breaks to our gate officers, and being the main point of contact for the community."

Booth asked whether full coverage would depend on the board's adoption of the new barcode sticker rates discussed in a later agenda item. Matulich explained that the board had approved the amended security budget at the November meeting and that tonight marked the first reading of the ordinance.

"If that ordinance doesn't pass, then the amended budget that was approved will not be viable anymore, so we would have to make some cuts," he said.

Director John Merchant asked whether there had been any consideration of providing barcodes to permanent guests, suggesting it could reduce tie-ups at the visitor gates and generate additional revenue.

Matulich acknowledged that the issue of "how do we push traffic out of the visitor lane over to the automated lanes" had been under discussion for some time. He explained that the concept was similar to the proposed voluntary barcode system for contractors who create backups at the visitor gate each morning. He also noted that any future issuance of barcodes would need to be coordinated with the Rancho Murieta Association.

Matulich next addressed the mission of the security department, emphasizing its longstanding role to observe and report. He stated that deterrence would become a primary focus moving forward. With community service

officers on patrol, the department creates a visible presence, noting that "presence is a big component with deterring bad actors."

The department also plans to leverage technology such as the network of security cameras around the community. "CSD actually has access to 30 plus security cameras ... we are really working to use those in a proactive way as a force multiplier for the community service officers that are out there and get our gate officers engaged in monitoring differing areas, possibly some hot spots," he said.

Matulich provided recent examples of camera use that resulted in one arrest.

"Over time, if word gets out ... that if you do something around Rancho Murieta, you're probably going to get caught, then that also can play into deterrence," Matulich said.

General Manager Mimi Morris said she wanted to acknowledge the role of IT Manager Andy Lee in keeping the cameras functioning and pulling off the needed data.

Barcode Ordinance

When the barcode ordinance came up on the agenda, Booth noted that even if the introduction and waiving of the first reading were approved that night, the ordinance would still need to come back for final approval in January.

Butler said as the sole board member of the Security Committee, she was making a motion to table it. Merchant said he would second her motion to open the discussion.

Butler said she didn't

believe they had been specific enough with the community, and she wanted the community to have that information before moving forward. Nor did she see it as an emergency.

"I'd really like to have some more time to understand and completely dig into what this is going to be like," she said.

Merchant agreed.

"I want to do everything to make sure this isn't a surprise, and I want to do everything we possibly can to fully explain how it is going to work before we ring the bell," he said.

Morris pointed out that would require two readings for the ordinance and a 30-day delay before the fee went into effect. She suggested that would allow enough time for communication that would include an article in the next Pipeline newsletter.

A back-and-forth discussion followed between Merchant and Matulich regarding the implementation. Matulich explained that the new fee would initially appear on customer bills in March, with future billing set for Jan. 1 each year.

"Are we going to have 50 people on Jan. 2 lined up at the gates because of their barcodes?" Merchant asked.

"We will have to see how this goes," Matulich responded. "But I'm not expecting people in mass not to pay their bills." He further clarified that the district would not immediately deactivate anyone's barcode and would follow a collection process similar to other utility bills.

After Booth invited Director Randy Jenco to share his thoughts, Jenco expressed support, stating that the adoption of the barcode ordinance was a great idea. He also noted that Booth and Butler, both members of the Communications Committee, would have until March to address any related concerns.

Booth spoke next, noting that there had been significant resistance to the barcode fee increase expressed on social media after the last meeting. He stated that, as a member of the Finance Committee, he believed the fee offered a creative way to provide additional funding for security and increased staffing. However, he also mentioned that he had told some people on social media he would ask to table the decision until it could be addressed as part of the budget process.

Booth observed that discussions about new fees often elicit complaints.

"There's always a percentage of folks who always complain about any increase in costs, even if it is down to the last nickel," he said. "I'm torn here, but I think we have a solution."

Booth recommended creating an informational sheet about the issue to be included in the next billing cycle and the Pipeline. The sheet would provide a brief explanation of the new barcode sticker fees, connecting them to the amended security budget and the hiring of additional security staff.

This approach, he said, would ensure members have the information before the board's next meeting in January, "where we can have more discussion and we can encourage folks to express their concerns and ask questions."

Booth then asked Butler if she thought that time frame was enough to satisfy her concern.

Butler said if they could pull it off, they should have a pretty good idea about the community's reaction by March.

"I really want to reiterate that as a community district, you just don't spring stuff on people," she said.

Booth said didn't disagree but pointed out that some people were already aware of the issue at some level, as evidenced by their complaints.

"I think the missing piece is making it clear," he said. "That is why I am suggesting this communication piece."

When Booth reminded the board that a motion was on the table, Butler said she was willing to withdraw it, and Merchant agreed to withdraw his second. Booth noted that the matter would be revisited in January, adding, "If those communications aren't completed, we can vote it down at that point, although hopefully that won't be necessary."

When Booth opened the floor for public comment, Tom Shewchuk noted that Booth had previously stated online that he would table the motion.

Booth informed Shewchuk that the motion to table the issue had just been withdrawn.

"I'm satisfied that we have accomplished what tabling would have done by addressing all this other stuff," he said.

Booth then moved to introduce the barcode ordinance and waive the reading, with Butler seconding the motion. The board approved it with a 5-0 vote, including an aye from Director Tim Maybee. ★



Rancho Murieta, a 3,500-acre country-club community, is an oasis of emerald fairways and manicured greens, built along the scenic banks of the Cosumnes River.

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Murieta Dance Explores 'Haunted Mansion'

Continued from page 1
 within its walls for centuries, cursed by a spell cast by the mansion's former master. However, the current owner, Madame Theodora, reveals to Maid Marie that she has discovered a way to break the spell and set everyone free, by uniting the living and the dead in a grand masquerade ball.

Famous characters Enola Holmes, Wednesday Addams, Hermione Granger, Kevin McCallister, and Barbie each receive a mysterious invitation to an eerie old mansion in the woods. Upon arrival, they are greeted by Madame Theodora, who tasks them with uncovering the mansion's hidden secrets and freeing the ghosts trapped within its walls.

They embark on thrilling adventures, piecing together clues to solve the ancient mystery. In a triumphant finale, the friends unite with the spirits at a magnificent Masquerade Ball, breaking the curse and restoring harmony to the haunted manor.

When asked how she developed the plot, Zimmerman explained, "The 'Haunted Mansion' was something the kids really wanted to do, and we thought we could have a lot of fun with it, which we did."

Next came the development of the concept, complete with scenes, music, and characters. All but two of the young actors portrayed iconic personalities from books, movies, and television, such as Hermione from

the Harry Potter series, Beetlejuice from the film of the same name, and Kevin McCallister from Home Alone. Zimmermann created the other two characters to serve as a bridge between the living and the dead, adding depth and cohesion to the storyline.

"I thought it would be interesting to throw all those different personalities into one situation and see what happened," she said.

As Zimmermann began writing the script, she had no idea which kids would play which roles. Ultimately, the cast members often had to race backstage to change costumes in mere seconds to be ready for their next dance number.

The production featured a dazzling array of costumes. "I always order costumes on sale to save money for the families, but sometimes we don't get the sizes we need," Zimmermann explained. "That's where Pam [Broussard] comes in. She fixes everything."

The most poignant moment of the production came when the number "Someone's Shoes" was performed on stage for the first time. Zimmermann had written the poem and set it to classical music, inspired by the emotional journey she experienced after her husband, Soeren Zimmermann, narrowly survived a motorcycle accident a year ago.

"Just seeing my daughter dancing with her father's shoes that stood on the side of the road after his accident was probably the moment that touched me



Artistic Director Doreen Zimmermann embraces longtime student Alexis Walters, who will be leaving the company upon her high school graduation in June. Walters has been a dedicated student for 12 years. Photos by Gail Bullen



A team of "Ghost Busters" investigates a mysterious sighting at the haunted mansion.

the most," she said. "We complain so much in life, it is easy to lose track of what is really important."

The show-stopping number that had the audience hysterically laughing featured eight fathers. Sporting fluorescent orange socks, they cavorted to a medley that included "Another One Bites the Dust" by Queen.

"The kids love their dads being involved, and the dads learn to respect and appreciate what their kids are doing," she said.

Zimmermann also honored longtime student Alexis Walters, who performed a solo and received a heartfelt embrace at the end of the show on Sunday. Walters has been with the program since Zimmermann began teaching dance 12 years ago and will be leaving after

graduating from high school.

Zimmermann wrote, directed, and choreographed this year's production with the support of choreographers Maddy Carges, Sienna Zimmermann, Dria Hanson, Corinne Salas, and Rylie Hartman, as well as vocal coach Laurel Robbins Goodson.

Zimmermann and her husband collaborated with their friends Dawn and Bryan Holm to create the stunning backdrops for the eerie haunted house. During the show, Wyatt Gaylor, James Doran, Scott Rau, Alex Rau, and Soeren Zimmermann managed lights, sound, and stage props, while Jeremy "JT" Turner served as the energetic emcee.

Zimmermann gave a special shoutout to Scott



The Junior Elite Competitive team delivers a lyrical performance to "Red Ribbon."

Rau, who has been her sound and technical expert for five years. "He has every single scene written into a computer program to connect with the microphones," she explained.

Before the recital and during intermission, attendees could enjoy beer, wine and other refreshments; bid in the silent auction; or purchase flowers and Murieta Dance merchandise. All of this was made possible by the generous support of families, friends, businesses and others who contributed their time and effort.

"We have amazing people in this community who provide a great support system. I am so grateful for everything and everyone," she said.

Zimmermann began teaching 12 years ago at the Murieta Health

Club with just 18 students. Today, her program has grown to include 123 students.

She now operates her own studio in Murieta Plaza, where her students participate in competitions throughout the year, earning first-place awards and other prestigious recognitions.

"Seeing my kids pour so much into this show every year makes me so happy and reminds me that what we dance teachers do matters," she said.

"We give them a sense of belonging outside of home, and for many, we become their home away from home. These kids stand up for one another, support each other, and love each other."

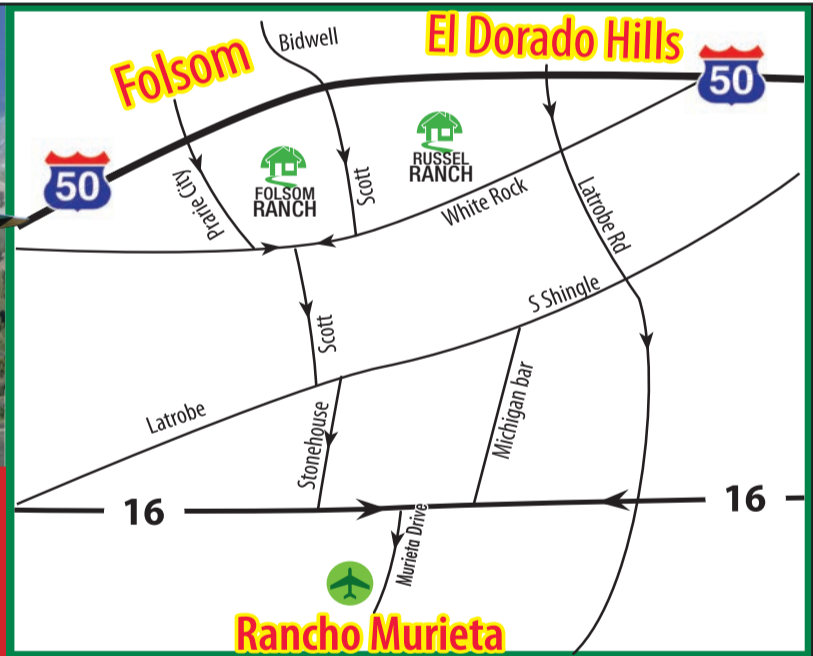
For more Murieta Dance Company photos, visit therivervalleytimes.com. ★

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

River Valley Times Expands Online Coverage in 2025

Starting in 2025, the River Valley Times will provide more timely updates on local events through its online platforms. Certain events will now be reported within one to two days of their occurrence, ensuring residents stay informed between the bi-monthly distribution of the printed edition.

Online updates will include a mix of brief summaries, in-depth stories and photos. Readers can access these updates at the River Valley website or through social media. Visit www.rivervalleytimes.com, <https://x.com/RVTMPG8> and <https://www.facebook.com/Therivervalleytimes>.

RM Kitchen Waste Now Allowed in Trash

Because the Rancho Murieta Community Services District has received a waiver from CalRecycle, Rancho Murieta residents are no longer required to collect and dispose of organic food waste separately from their trash.

The waiver went into effect in December. However, the 2025 Cal-Waste collection calendar shows that the trash hauler will continue the weekly pickup of the green waste organics cart. The waiver also means that CSD will be able to reduce the solid waste monthly bill once it completes negotiations with Cal-Waste.

RM Blood Drive Slated Jan. 27

The Rancho Murieta Women's Club has slated its next blood drive on Monday, Jan. 27 from noon to 6 p.m. at the Rancho Murieta Community Church, 14670 Cantova Way, Rancho Murieta.

Appointments to donate can be made online at donors.vitalant.org by using blood drive code SMFM053 or by calling Vitalant at 877-258-4825. Walk-ins will be accommodated if space permits. Donors will receive a \$2 off coupon for Go 4 Pizza and will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift card from Go 4 Pizza. Eat well and drink plenty of water prior to donating and please bring a photo ID.

If you have eligibility questions call Vitalant at 877-258-4825 or navigate to

vitalant.org. One donation can save more than one life. There is no substitute for blood that can only come from volunteer donors.

Garden Club to Explore the Art of Bonsai on Jan. 28

The River Valley Garden Club is excited to welcome a renowned Bonsai expert as the featured speaker at its upcoming meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 28 at the RMA Building. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for socializing and snacks, with a brief business meeting starting at 7 p.m.

Following the meeting, Roger Steel, from the American Bonsai Association of Sacramento (ABAS), will present an engaging talk on the art of bonsai. With over 30 years of experience in studying and practicing bonsai, Steel is known for his entry-level classes, "Dig In and Chop In," as well as his demonstrations at garden clubs and nurseries. His presentation will showcase the techniques and possibilities of bonsai using live tree examples.

Guests are welcome to attend their first meeting for free. Annual membership fees are \$25 for individuals and \$35 for families. For more information about the club, visit rivervalleygardenclub.net.

Women's Club Slates Magician for 33rd Anniversary

The Rancho Murieta Women's Club is excited to celebrate its 33rd anniversary with a special luncheon and a captivating performance by a renowned magician on Wednesday, Jan. 29, at the Rancho Murieta Country Club. Doors will open at 10 a.m.

The entertainment will feature Sacramento-based magician and entertainer Andy Amyx, accompanied by his wife, Georgia. Amyx is a world-class magician whose performances have delighted audiences worldwide. Attendees will enjoy a choice of panko-crusted chicken or pasta primavera, accompanied by delicious sides and dessert.

Tickets are \$35 for members and \$40 for guests. To reserve your spot, please contact Cindy Shamrock at 916-354-1918 or Barbara Armstrong at 916-541-1884. Reservations must be made by Jan. 17. ★

SECURITY LOGS

Following is a summary of activity for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department for the following dates. Note: these log entries are condensed. For full security log details, go to the CSD website at www.rmcsd.com.

Dec. 14

7:41 p.m., Juvenile delinquency, Domingo Drive: Report of three juveniles doorbell ditching; upon reporting to South Gate dispatch the juveniles knocked and ran again. Patrol responded and monitored the area for suspects; unable to locate.

7:57 p.m., Animal complaint, Venado Drive: Complaint of barking dog on Venado Drive for 30 minutes. Patrol responded; quiet on arrival.

Dec. 15

10 p.m., Animal complaint, Venado Drive: Complaint of barking dog for two hours. Patrol responded and heard two large dogs barking. No one home; voice-mail left and door notice left at front door.

Dec. 16

2:34 a.m., Citation, Anillo Way: RMA rule violation; resident parked overnight on street in front of home. Citation issued.

Dec. 17

9:30 p.m., Resident complaint, Anillo Way: Report of reckless driver on Puerto Drive. Reporting party informed of vehicle and license plate. Patrol approached home from vehicle information; unable to contact.

Dec. 18

3:11 a.m., Open door, Murieta Gardens: During routine patrol, open gate found at the propane tank yard. Area was checked; no activity found; area cleared.

3:22 a.m., Suspicious vehicle, Bel Air Shopping Center: During routine patrol of Bel Air parking lot, an unoccupied vehicle was found at the Circle K gas station construction site. Patrol approached area and found vehicle unoccupied. Building unoccupied, doors secured without any signs of damage or vandalism.

11:36 p.m., Citation, Guadalupe Drive: RMA rule violation; North back area access after hours. Citation issued.

Dec. 19

3:35 a.m., Citation, Colbert Drive: RMA rule violation; resident parked overnight on street in front home; citation issued.

3:41 a.m., Citation, Colbert Drive: RMA rule violations: resident parked two vehicles in driveway, and one vehicle parked on street in front of home. Citation issued.

Dec. 20

7:20 p.m., Resident complaint, Celebrar Street: Report of sign on street "kids at play" obstructing vehicles from traveling through. Patrol made contact with owner, who was having a gathering with neighbors. Patrol confirmed sign was out of way for passing vehicles.

Dec. 22

11:32 p.m., Abandoned vehicle, Via Ghiberti: Complaint of abandoned vehicle disabled in front of home in Retreats North. Patrol followed up and found vehicle to be disabled with front-end damage. Information of vehicle gathered, owner to be contacted and office at Retreats to be informed.

Dec. 23

12:24 a.m., Citation, Reynosa Drive: RMA rule violation. Guest of resident at Lake Calero, North back area after sunset, past park hours. Citation issued.

12:24 p.m., Citation, Colbert Drive: RMA rule violation. Resident at Lake Calero, North back area after sunset. Citation issued for park hours.

8:15 p.m., Juvenile delinquency, Domingo: Report of group of juveniles doorbell ditching on Domingo. Patrol requested. Reporting party called back stating juveniles drove off on e-bikes; no further complaints.

Dec. 27

12:32 a.m., Citation, De La Cruz Drive: RMA rule violation. Disabled vehicle parked without moving over 72 hours. Citation issued.

1:41 a.m., Citation, Murieta South Parkway: RMA rule violation. Guest vehicle parked at North Gazebo park after hours. Unable to locate driver. Citation issued.

Dec. 28

12:25 p.m., Resident complaint, Bel Air Shopping Center: Panhandlers in area with signage asking people for money. Patrol approached and asked to leave subjects complied and left area.

3:50 p.m., Juvenile delinquency, Murieta Gardens: Report of juveniles causing a disturbance at Murieta Gardens with e-bikes, speeding and performing wheelies in roadway. Patrol responded; juveniles gone on arrival.

6:14 p.m., Juvenile delinquency, Legacy Lane: Group of juveniles reported in Murieta Gardens on Legacy Lane smoking and play fighting. Juveniles were unable to be located upon patrol's arrival. ★

MEMORIAL

CAROL ANN HEGGE • 12/20/1947 - 11/10/2024

Carol Ann Hegge (nee Wilkinson) was born on Dec 20, 1947 to Donald and Betty Wilkinson in Visalia California. Carol was the eldest of three children (Cathy and Eric). Her family moved to the Sacramento area in 1959. She attended Foothill High School graduating in 1966. She enjoyed spending summers with her extended family and her many cousins she always found something to smile about.



blessed with two children, Kirsten and Ethan. Kirsten married Jonathan Krull and they have two wonderful children, Hudson and Peyton. Ethan married Krista Roden and have one child, Beckett.

Carol enjoyed people from all walks of life. She was a compassionate and kind person that many were fortunate to call a friend. Her children and her grandchildren were everything to her. She spoiled them at every opportunity, claiming it was corrective guidance.

Thank you to Dr Brooks and her staff at the UCD Cancer Dept. And thank you to Chris (college roommate) and Christine Teeter (Fred's Sister) who came from Oregon to spend the last month supporting and comforting Carol.

A celebration of life will be held in the spring of 2025.

met her eventual husband Fred Hegge. They had wonderful and adventurous times together and, fortunately for Fred, Carol was unable to find anyone better; they married in July 1984. They lived on their ranch they built in Sloughhouse from 1978 until her passing on November 10, 2024. Fred and Carol were

MEMORIAL

SHERYL LYNN WOLHART • 06-28-1957 — 11-15/16-2024

Sheryl Lynn Wolhart passed away peacefully in her sleep on the night of November 15, 2024, at the age of 67.

Born on June 28, 1957, Sheryl was the cherished daughter of Paul and LaVerne Boettin, who survive her. She was

a devoted sister to Paul (PJ) Boettin and a proud aunt to Christopher.

Sheryl's greatest joy was her family. She was a loving mother to Jillian Bryla (husband Steven) and Jacob Wolhart, and an adoring "Grammy" to her treasured

grandchildren, Kinsley, Leighton, and Maci.

Sheryl's kind heart and dedication touched the lives of many, both human and furry. Her absence is deeply felt by all who loved her.

A celebration of Sheryl's life will be held at a later date.



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SOLOS Presents Water Moratorium Petitions to CSD

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Accomplishments on two different fronts were highlighted at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District meeting on Dec. 18.

The first was the conclusion of a petition drive demanding a moratorium on future development that was conducted by Save Our Lakes & Open Spaces (SOLOS). Initiated in August, the drive secured 2,025 signatures from residents.

The second was a report from General Manager Mimi Morris, who detailed 38 accomplishments by district staff over the past year “as part of the stabilization and rebuilding of the organization’s systems, staff and procedures.”

Morris also provided an update on a settlement with Sacramento County regarding district violations involving chlorine gas. Additionally, the board addressed a wide range of topics during the four-hour meeting.

Water Moratorium

After introducing herself as the president of SOLOS, Cheryl McElhany said that she was presenting 2,025 petitions demanding a moratorium on future development and read a letter outlining the reasons behind the request.

McElhany explained that the petition was based on findings documented in the draft of the CSD Integrated Water Master Plan, which indicates the community will face critical water supply issues and insufficient storage capacity in the coming years. However, she argued that the options listed in the IWMP “are not viable solutions.”

Another issue, McElhany noted, is that the CSD will soon reach the threshold of ratepayers requiring a designation as an Urban Water District. This would require the board to develop an emergency backup plan as mandated by the State Water Resources Board.

“Before any sort of water augmentation or consideration is considered for the current CSD ratepayers, a moratorium on future development must be implemented,” she said.

McElhany also referred to the August board meeting, during which the board approved the issuance of will-call letters (water hookups) for 240 lots in the already approved developments of Residences East, Riverview and the Retreats. She said that the



Cheryl McElhany, president of Save Our Lakes & Open Spaces, presented 2,025 signed petitions demanding a moratorium on development at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board meeting on Dec. 18. To assist the district secretary, she also copied all the petitions onto a flash drive. Photo by Gail Bullen

3:2 board approval dismayed many residents and that it jeopardized a reliable water supply to existing residents.

(Director Randy Jenco made the motion at the August meeting to approve the issuance of the will-serve letters, reasoning that opposing them would be futile. He argued that the district would face a lawsuit within a week and ultimately be compelled to provide water, resulting in significant litigation costs that would burden both the district and its ratepayers. District Counsel Patrick Enright clarified that providing water to the Rancho North subdivision was a separate issue, as it had not yet been approved by the county.)

McElhany urged the board to declare a water emergency under the applicable state code.

“It is the appropriate action to protect what precious water we have and limit the imminent threat until reliable options can be developed,” she said. “We also ask that forward movement on the IWMP be tabled until this moratorium request is formally considered by the board.”

After reading her letter, McElhany explained that all addresses on the petitions had been verified to confirm that the signers were residents. She added that SOLOS had also copied the petitions onto a flash drive to assist District Secretary Amelia Wilder.

Board President Stephen Booth told McElhany that the board couldn’t take any action because it was listed

as a discussion item on the agenda.

“But it is something we need to consider whether we put it on committee or board meetings in the future,” he said.

Booth and Director Linda Butler voted against issuing the will-call letters at the August meeting. Following the meeting, John Merchant, vice president of SOLOS, initiated the petition drive. Merchant has since been elected to the CSD board.

SOLOS is a community action group that was formed in 2015 to advocate for responsible development after Rancho Murieta Properties filed an application with the county to build the Rancho North subdivision, which still hasn’t been approved. SOLOS has more than 1,400 members.

District’s Accomplishments

During her general manager’s report, Morris noted that Booth and Butler suggested at the last Communications Committee meeting that the district should do a better job of highlighting its accomplishments. In response, she explained, she was including a list of the district’s major achievements from the past year along with a draft strategic plan.

“It’s probably no surprise that the organization was mismanaged for years,” she said. “This led to the chronic and extensive turnover in the accounting staff between 2019 and 2023, which in

turn led to an almost complete loss of institutional knowledge in a variety of areas including how to use financial accounting software and how to maintain related financial journals and ledgers.”

She added that there were no written policies and procedures in place, nor was there a smooth transition between management teams.

The 38 accomplishments on her list included many highlights. Between August 2023 and November 2024, the district temporarily suspended and later reinstated late fees after resolving billing issues. In November 2023, the district hired a director of finance and administration. By December 2023, the district had reinstated monthly budget-to-actual reporting. Additionally, from August 2023 to January 2024, the district worked to address outstanding audit issues, ultimately finalizing the 2020/21 audit.

In January 2024, the district recalculated the indirect cost rate to reduce the burden on the security budget. From March to June 2024, the district developed a balanced 2024-25 operational budget that enables the board to direct the property taxes entirely into reserves as recommended by the Grand Jury Report.

Between April and June 2024, the district resolved over 200 faulty meter readings and addressed the corresponding billing issues. From July to December 2024,



CSD General Manager Mimi Morris reports about 38 district accomplishments in the past year. File photo

it corrected errors in the accounting for the fiscal year 2021-22 in preparation for the audit.

Between March and August 2024, the district successfully collected more than \$500,000 in overdue connection fees from developers. In November and December 2024, it revised its security program to ensure full security gate and patrol coverage.

Morris said her list didn’t include any of the major operational achievements such as repairs of spontaneous leaks and unexpected breaks in water and sewer lines.

Chlorine Penalties

In another part of her general manager’s report, Morris said she and Operations Manager Eric Houston had met with Sacramento County’s Environmental Management Department (EMD) to negotiate a settlement regarding reporting, training and compliance violations related to the district’s use of chlorine gas, which dated back to 2017.

Morris previously reported to the board that after the EMD notified Interim Operations Manager Travis Bohannon about the violations in June, he immediately contacted a contractor to bring the district records up to date.

Morris said the EMD team was pleased about the district’s plans to move from chlorine gas to sodium hypochlorite at both treatment plants. Although EMD originally planned to levy a \$89,000 fine, the team reduced it to \$16,000.

“They considered reducing it further due to our contrition and conscientiousness, but felt that due to both the staff costs they incurred in the non-compliance review effort and the severity of the noncompliance, the fine needed to be large enough to send a

message to the district,” Morris said

The board approved the settlement with EMD later in the meeting.

In Other Business:

The board approved a \$81,190 quote from Domenichelli & Associates to prepare a preliminary engineering design to relocate the water and sewer lines in Murieta Village. The project is expected to last 25 weeks.

Houston made his first presentation about “Water 101,” which is an educational piece he is developing for the district’s website.

The board sent a prior decision to hire an outside expert to review the draft IWMP back to the Improvement Committee to discuss what it should entail.

Morris advised the board that the district will replace a damaged payment box in the RMA parking lot.

The board authorized the Improvements Committee to solicit quotes for a bathymetric study of Clementia Reservoir. Prior studies showed that Calero and Chesbro held less water than had been assumed for decades.

Resident Nicole Romeo reported on a serious water issue at her home on Fuente De Paz. Houston said he would report about it at the Jan. 7 Improvements Committee meeting.

Houston provided an update regarding a water supply augmentation fee rate study that is intended to increase the amount developers pay.

The board approved two contracts for Basin 5 off Reynosa Drive, also known as Lost Lake. The first was \$10,100 for mechanical harvesting of vegetation and \$5,896 for the installation of an additional fountain.

The board’s next regular meeting is at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 15. ★

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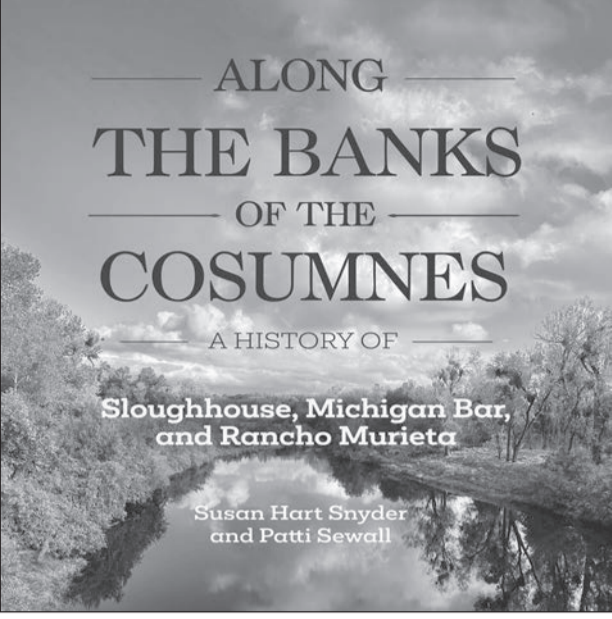
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RM Writers Slate Book Launch Jan. 11 and 16



Rancho Murieta authors Susan Hart Snyder and Patti Sewall are hosting book signings to celebrate the release of "Along the Banks of the Cosumnes." Their book covers the vibrant history of the Cosumnes River region, from the arrival of intrepid pioneers in Sloughhouse to the development of Rancho Murieta. The first event is a book launch 2 to 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 11 at The Villas Clubhouse. The second, a signing and wine tasting, is at 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 16 at the Murieta Inn. Image courtesy Susan Hart Snyder and Patti Sewall

Tips for Staying Safe in Cold

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - With temperatures staying cool this season, it's a great time to review cold weather tips.

Check on elderly family members, friends and neighbors. Seniors and those with serious medical conditions are at risk. Check on community members who might be vulnerable to ensure they are safely keeping warm. Bring your pets inside when temperatures start to dip near freezing. A dog or cat left outside in severe cold weather can quickly die from exposure. Except for exercise and walks, all dogs and cats are safer indoors during the winter. Make sure your pets have a warm, draft-free place indoors with a dry

mat or blanket that they can lie on. For additional winter weather tips for animals, check out the Bradshaw Animal Shelter's website at animalcare.sac-county.gov.

Heat your home safely; carbon monoxide is a silent killer. It is not OK to heat the inside of your home with any kind of barbecue, propane heater or any other fuel-fired equipment, due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Only use heaters installed with your home and those designed to be used indoors. Make sure that your natural gas furnaces and other appliances are in good, clean working order. Insulate outdoor pipes that lead into your home to prevent freezing. Seal with caulk around the pipes that lead into and out of your home. Inside your home,

leave the bathroom and under-sink cabinets open to help warm the water. If your pipes freeze, leave your tap on and call a plumber. You can defrost your pipes using a hair-dryer on a low setting, working your way slowly from the faucet to where your pipe enters the wall. County residents who need to have their water turned off in order to make repairs to their lines can go online or call 311 (or 916-875-4311 if calling from out of the area).

Ensure proper drainage by scooping up leaves and debris. Keeping storm drains clear can prevent street flooding and black ice from forming.

When it is raining, reduce your vehicle speed. Wet roads increase the distance and time needed to stop your vehicle. Be extra

cautious on roads, bridges and overpasses when temperatures are 32 degrees or below because of black ice; slow down and give yourself extra spacing between vehicles in front of you.

Watch for tree limbs. As temperatures dip, trees become vulnerable to limbs snapping. For downed trees or branches in the roadway, county residents can go online or call 311 (or 916-875-4311 from out of the area).

Prepare for wind. Secure yard items that could blow around and be prepared for the possibility of loss of power. For downed power lines, stay away and immediately call 9-1-1.

Where to get help: Call 211 in Sacramento or go online for information on emergency shelter services.

Learn more at sacramento-ready.sacounty.gov. ★

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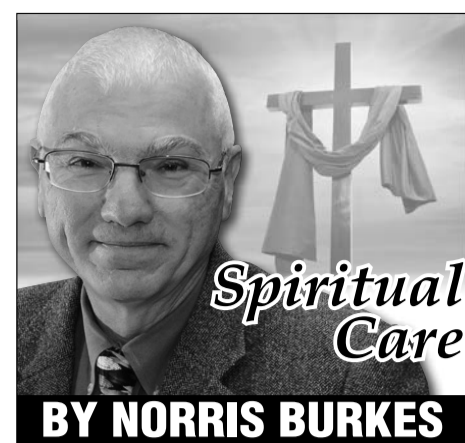
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“What will we do during the volunteer week?” asked another.

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“Imagine us working together, rolling two coats of white paint on crumbling walls. The paint provides a bright pallet for those murals intended to inspire future readers.

The children will surround us, chattering the few English words they know. Their smiles go for miles as they read the picture books we bring.”

Some in my group gave an empathetic sigh.

Finally, one woman asked the most common question about our trips “Is it dangerous?”

“That’s a risk you will have to assess on your own. We safely welcomed volunteers from ages 3 to 83. I can also tell you that that my daughter, Sara, her husband and her two children spent several years in Honduras.

Unsure how many takers I’d persuaded, I added, “While the days are sometimes hot and long, I reward my volunteers with ice-cream cones.”

I suggested additional questions might be answered on our website at ChispaProject.org/volunteertrip. “Read the details and fill out the forms,” I said. “Watch the five-minute video and e-mail Sara or me with your questions.”

And, finally, you know I made one more pitch –

“If you can’t fly with me, then “Buy with Me!” ★

Not long ago, I spoke to a Spanish club, a group of women hoping to hone their Spanish skills and asked the attendees to “Come fly with me.”

Not wanting my invite to be misinterpreted, my wife Becky, chimed in, “And me too.”

A few older woman heard a reference to United Airline’s 1968 campaign, “Come Fly with me.” But the younger ones began humming the Jonas Brothers 2009 hit “Fly with Me.”

“To clarify,” I said, “I’d like you join us on one of the two volunteer trips to Honduras to help Chispa Project.

Of course, I was pushing the Spanish immersion trip on April 6-13. “But no worries, you needn’t speak Spanish or have any particular skill; you just need to be willing to help out as needed!”

One woman seemed interested, but questioned the sparse accommodations, hoping to book her own hotel.

Well, you know me. I had an answer for her.

“Both trips have nice accommodations, but if you want the 5-star trip, then join us in March 5-16. It’ll be an “immersive experience of volun-tourism that will allow you to explore one of the hidden gems of Honduras.

“Arguably the most beautiful colonial town in the country, Copan boasts traditional Mayan chocolate, the best Honduran coffee, and some of the most incredible and well-preserved Mayan Ruins.”

Yup, I was reading from the travel brochure.

If you’ve only recently joined my readership, you’ll need to know that my daughter, Sara, started Chispa Project, pronounced cheez-pah, meaning

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



What a difference a week makes! Yes, a lot can happen in a week, and the Sacramento Kings are living proof.

Gone is former coach of the year, Mike Brown, and interim head coach Doug Christie not only is riding a season high 4-game winning streak, he’s riding a basketball juggernaut as well.

Wins over injury depleted Dallas Mavericks and Philadelphia 76ers were welcome wins, but to handily defeat the Memphis Grizzlies and archrival Golden State Warriors back-to-back was a sign that the Kings were truly on the road to recovery.

A horrid 6-game losing streak was the undoing of Mike Brown, and every pundit, newscaster and fan had a different opinion. The general consensus was that coach Brown had lost the locker room, and after a meltdown loss to the Detroit Pistons in which collectively the Kings and in particular DeAaron Fox guarded no one, the Pistons came away with an improbable 1-point win. 4-point plays to win a game are a rarity, and it’s no fun to be on the losing end, but that’s precisely where the Kings found themselves.

Whether coach Brown had truly lost his voice with the team is still open to conjecture, but from this writer’s perspective, his lack of any consistency as it relates to playing time for players off the bench, led to overall sub-par productivity. Players from Keon Ellis, Alex Len, to Trey Lyles never knew from one game to the next if they would see significant minutes or no minutes at all.

Doug Christie was tapped on the shoulder and asked to take over the head coaching reigns, and so far, he’s been a welcome addition to the head seat.

Some players have commented that Christie brings the mindset of a former player to the table, and thus far his voice is being heard. In particular the defensive end of the court has seen significant improvement, and the past four games have featured some of the best defensive basketball that fans have seen in memory.

A wire-to-wire victory over the Golden State Warriors in which Sacramento never allowed the Warriors any breathing room, was a glimpse of what the

Sactown boys are capable of, and Malik Monk had perhaps his finest game of the season. Malik matched Steph Curry with 26 points and added a season high 12 assists, but his defense was equally impressive. Domantas Sabonis had his usual stellar performance, adding 22 points and 13 rebounds while playing only three quarters.

Does coaching make a difference? You bet it does. Does that mean that winning four of five games since Mike Brown’s departure, the Kings are headed to the playoffs.

Too early to tell Kings fans but take solace in seeing what your hometown boys are capable of doing. Not just playing tough teams and winning, but actually accomplishing blow-out wins.

Keon Ellis has returned to form and did a yeoman’s job in filling in for an injured DeAaron Fox in the win over the Warriors. Keon has a big upside, as does Trey Lyles who is also showing signs of looking like his former self, playing solid basketball on both ends of the court.

Say hello to Devin Carter Kings fans, and this young rookie has game! Playing in just his 2nd NBA game, Devin broke into the scoring column with 13 points while adding an impressive seven rebounds. This youngster has been on the sidelines all season recovering from off-season shoulder surgery, and he looks eager to impress his fans and teammates alike. I like what I see in Devin, and his defense in particular on Stephon Curry was impressive to see. His debut has been a long time coming, and it could not have come at a more auspicious time. I look for coach Christie to give him all the playing time he can handle, and with the unfortunate departure of Davion Mitchell, another guard that can play ferocious defense is a welcome sight.

Stay tuned Kings fans and stay away from ugly trade rumors. Trades will invariably come, but let’s just hope it doesn’t involve the core members we’ve come to love!

All be best!
Your thoughts are always welcome at vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com. ★

Financial Outlook for RMCC Dims

Continued from page 1

The most concerning assessment of the club’s future came from Troon Golf, a prominent golf course management company. Last summer, RMP enlisted Troon to evaluate its facilities, finances and member usage.

In his update, Dutton attached a Sept. 14 letter from Dyer, who reported that Troon came up with six sobering conclusions after its assessment.

1. The club is in a “death spiral,” experiencing ongoing and projected losses despite rising revenues.

2. The club’s lack of capital investments in its facilities has negatively affected member experience.

3. The 50-year-old water system on the North Course needs to be replaced at an estimated cost of \$4.7 million, while the system on the South Course is projected to require replacement within the next 10 years.

4. Without a significant capital investment, Troon’s recommended solution is to downsize the facility from a 36-hole course to a single 18-hole course.

5. The club’s facility is unlikely to attract any third-party buyers given its current state, and Troon has no interest in managing the club under these conditions.

6. Any model will require between \$4.2 million and \$14.7 million in additional capital.

In his update, Dutton explained that the board had planned to share Dyer’s letter with the membership in October. However, a golf club broker requested it be withheld during his search for a buyer, “for which we now know there is not one.”

In an interview with the River Valley Times, Dutton clarified that the six conclusions from the Troon assessment were taken directly from the report’s executive summary. He also noted that the board was not given an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft report.

“The bottom line is we never got to see the report to respond back to the information,” he said. “In fact, we have never seen the final report. It’s only been an executive summary.”

An example of failing to verify assumptions and numbers with the board before finalizing the report involves the North Course irrigation system.

“What really needs to be replaced are

the main artery pipelines that run underneath the ground and are 50 years old,” Dutton explained. “The upper portion, the sprinkler heads, the computerized system are all newer.”

On the other hand, the club didn’t pay for the Troon assessment.

“RMP did it, so it is their property, and we really don’t have a right to step in the middle of it,” Dutton said.

Going forward, RMP has made it clear that they are just a “landowner and landlord, and not a golf course operator,” Dutton told members in his update. Nor is RMP willing to invest additional capital in the property.

Dutton said options for a potential member purchase of the club were discussed during a Dec. 4 meeting at the Murieta Inn. He noted that his board wasn’t invited to the meeting, but he decided to attend after receiving text messages about “some sort of meeting.”

Dutton anticipated the meeting would focus on water rights and development, which it did during the first half. However, the discussion later shifted to the club’s existence and future.

“It was clear at this meeting the RMP is not aggressively searching for a buyer,” he noted.

Various options for a member purchase of the club were “tossed about, but all were lacking in substance and viability,” Dutton wrote. Nor would a member purchase provide enough revenue for a swimming pool or a community center.

Considerations regarding purchase of the club abound, according to Dutton.

“If RMCC (the club) buys it, all the current liabilities and issues stay in place,” he wrote. “If a member group purchases it, RMCC will still need to file for bankruptcy.”

During the Dec. 4 meeting, it was mentioned that RMP could implement a 60-plus-day closure of the entire property. Under this plan, RMP would hire a firm to maintain the course for future sale or potential operation. While this approach might eliminate RMP’s pension liability, it would not absolve the club of its other liabilities. The deadline for the club to submit an offer to purchase the property is Oct. 31, 2025, with the lease set to expire on Oct. 31, 2028.

“Since the deal collapsed with the

prospective buyer, it has been easy to see that we have been nothing but pawns in this process,” Dutton wrote.

The positive financial progress in 2024 has given RMP additional time to pursue a resolution with either an internal or external buyer. Dutton also pointed out that the club’s continued operation avoids the need for RMP to hire a firm to manage and maintain the facilities in the event of bankruptcy.

“This operational model also ensures the monthly lease payment of almost \$24K covers the loan payment RMP states they have on the property,” he wrote.

“We, the Club, will continue to facilitate anything that get us to the sale of the property inclusive of the original goal of including a pool and community center,” he added.

After a thorough discussion of this information over the past few months, the board approved a preliminary 2025 budget that includes a maximum dues increase of 5%, as permitted by the by-laws. The increase is set to take effect on April 1.

Dutton said the existing dues are insufficient to meet operating financial needs, as operating costs have risen by at least 5%, and insurance costs have increased significantly. He also noted that the current dues structure is below the median levels of other clubs in the same market.

“Without an increase in revenue, this shortfall can only be covered by a reduction in services and/or personnel,” Dutton wrote.

The final budget process will explore alternatives to address this deficiency for the remainder of the lease term. The board is in the process of finalizing the 2025 budget, which is scheduled for adoption at the Jan. 30 board meeting.

In his update, Dutton outlined three recommendations from Troon, emphasizing that none of them included provisions for a community center or pool.

1. The Status Quo Model entails operating without increasing dues beyond the 5% annual limit allowed by the bylaws. This approach is anticipated to lead to insolvency and the club being returned to RMP.

2. Model 1 proposes eliminating one golf course and assumes a 20% reduction in membership. Under this model, monthly dues for golf members would be

\$700 plus a \$100 capital fee, while social members would pay \$120 plus a \$25 capital fee. The initiation fee would be set at \$10,000, and tournaments would be limited to Mondays.

3. Model 2 proposes retaining both courses and assumes a 25% reduction in membership, offset by the addition of 20 new members annually. Under this model, monthly dues for golf members would increase to \$800 plus a \$100 capital fee, while social members would pay \$150 plus a \$25 capital fee. The plan also includes a \$15,000 initiation fee.

Despite the three options, Dutton stated that the only choice would be the Status Quo Model unless the membership votes to either amend the bylaws or approve a one-time dues increase exceeding 5%.

Dutton said that club will operate in 2025 “as if we will always be in business.” He noted that the club has sufficient funds in the bank to cover wages and pay invoices for products and services. Additionally, it maintains contracts with the culinary and grounds unions.

“Unless some significant financial event occurs that costs an overwhelming amount of money, we should be able to continue operating through the end of 2025,” Dutton wrote. “Going forward our goal is to maintain and enhance member experiences at the club.”

In addition to the sobering assessment from Troon, the RMP letter included other notable statements. Dyer emphasized that the golf courses enhance Rancho Murieta with their year-round scenic beauty and are a valuable community asset. “However, the community has not maintained the asset, and it is in danger,” he stated.

Dyer also highlighted that the golf courses and the Rancho Community Services District (RMCS D) are co-dependent. Per the state Water Resources Control Board, the district must dispose of its treated wastewater on the golf courses, where it is used to irrigate the turf.

“Frankly, a big part of any golf course solution is an RMCS D-financed refurbishment of the irrigation/wastewater disposal system that should be financed by all water users in RMCS D, including future water users,” Dyer wrote. ★

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Theater Troupe Entertains RM Women's Club

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Women's Club kicked off the holiday season with a performance by the Sutter Street Theatre at its Dec. 4 luncheon held at the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

The musical theater troupe presented a shortened version of their "Holidays in the Hills" production, which is set in the late 1800s on Sutter Street in Folsom, where the town folk get together for a festive seasonal party.

The luncheon also marked a milestone for the club, drawing the largest attendance to a luncheon since the pandemic.

The short program preceding the entertainment featured notable moments, including a tribute to longtime member Pat Lytle, a discussion about potential complications with future blood drives, and announcements of two upcoming events: a magician's performance in honor of the club's 33rd anniversary and the return of the popular fashion show.

Club President Bonnie Kirschman welcomed six new members and shared that 75 others had renewed their memberships.

"I also want to thank Vickie Joyner for these gorgeous centerpieces," she added.

Pat Lytle Tribute

Kirschman fought back tears during the tribute.

"On a sad note, most of you knew Pat Lytle. She was one of our past presidents, and we've lost her," she said.

Lytle was a longtime member who co-chaired the blood drives for several years, continued to make snacks and supported subsequent drives. She also served as the Sunshine Chair and hosted the garden tour.

After moving to Rancho Murieta in 1996 to be closer to family, Lytle quickly became involved in community clubs. She later met and married Billy Lytle, who preceded her in death. Their home became a hub for family gatherings, filled with laughter and celebration. Not one to shy away from new challenges, Lytle took up golf at age 70.

Lytle passed away at home on Oct. 14. A celebration of her life was held Dec. 14 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church on.

Blood Drive

Patti Keating, who co-chairs the



Sutter Street Theatre performers bring old-fashioned Christmas cheer to the Rancho Murieta Women's Club luncheon on Dec. 4. Photos by Gail Bullen

club's quarterly community blood drive, shared encouraging results from the most recent drive on Oct. 28. Of the 66 people who registered, Vitalant collected 43 whole blood donations and nine Power Red donations, totaling 61 pints of blood. Keating noted that 65 people had scheduled appointments, 10 others were walk-ins, and seven missed their appointments.

"We will have even a bigger event in January," she promised.

Keating also addressed a logistical challenge affecting future blood drives.

"We also want to give you a heads-up that the Rancho Murieta Community Church is going through a major remodeling next year," she said. Once it begins, we will have to relocate our blood drives until they are finished."

She added that the club hopes to provide updates about a temporary location during the final blood drive at the church on Jan. 27 before construction begins.

"In the meantime, feel free to come to one of us, and we'll tell you what we know," she said. "Also, keep volunteering and helping. We appreciate you so much."

Upcoming Events

The crowd applauded as Kirschman announced that Erin Bailey and Janell Rogers have stepped up to chair next year's fashion show.

"We are super excited to bring back the fashion show on May 7, and we know we have very big shoes to fill," Bailey told attendees. "We are looking for models, or if you would like to join our committee, please let us know."

Kirschman shared additional exciting news that was first announced in the club newsletter.

"Toni Anania has decided to take the vice president position, so she will be in charge of setting up the luncheons and the entertainment for 2025," Kirschman said.

Anania expressed her enthusiasm for working alongside the board members.

"They do so much all year long," she said, asking for applause for their hard work. She encouraged members to provide feedback on the luncheons.

"We are open to ideas because these luncheons are a wonderful opportunity for the entire club to get together, and we want to make it as enjoyable as possible within our means," she said.

Looking ahead, Anania reminded everyone about the next luncheon on Jan. 29.

"We will be celebrating the club's 33rd anniversary," she said. We will have a fabulous and world-class magician, Andy Amyx, and his wife, who has now joined the act."

Anania then introduced the day's entertainment: the Sutter Street Theatre's performance of "Holiday in the Hills," a holiday celebration set on Sutter Street in the late 1800s.

"This production has been performed over 300 times in various forms over the last 19 years," she said. "The founders and directors, Connie Mockenhaupt and Mike Jimena, guarantee to get us in the holiday spirit."

Sutter Street Theatre

Jimena introduced Mockenhaupt as the entrepreneurial Emma Spencer. Known as Folsom's madam, Spencer legally operated a business called a bathhouse. Jimena also highlighted her philanthropic side.

"She gave a brand-new organ to the church," he said. "By my calculations, that makes her the first organ donor."

Mockenhaupt then introduced Jimena as Peter J. Fox, the editor of the Folsom Telegraph.

"He was one of the most important people in town," she said.

Jimena accepted the recognition with a playful remark to the audience: "It is my duty to tell you that every song sung



Theater founders Connie Mockenhaupt and Mike Jimena portray real-life business leaders from Folsom in the late 1800s: she as the town madam and he as the newspaper editor.

today, every story told, every word uttered is based on historical fact ... given a lie or two."

The production featured vignettes ranging from comical to touching, and the music spanned contemporary and traditional styles.

Two production numbers had the audience laughing. The first was a medley of eight well-known tunes with rewritten lyrics poking fun at Christmas shopping.

"Happy Days Are Here Again" became "Shopping Days Are Here Again," "Oh, Christmas Tree" turned into "Oh, plastic tree, where are the instructions," and "We Will Rock You" transformed into "We Will Flock You."

The troupe also delivered a riotous parody of the traditional "Twelve Days of Christmas." Sample lyrics included:

*"The third day after Christmas, my mother caught the croup;
I had to use the three French hens to make some chicken soup.*

The four calling birds were a big mistake, for their language was obscene.

The five gold rings were completely fake, and they turned my fingers green."

Later in the program, Jimena shifted the focus back to the meaning of Christmas. A heartfelt performance of "Mary, Did You Know?" followed, posing rhetorical questions to Mary about whether she fully understood the divine identity and future mission of her baby, Jesus.

Near the end of the production, the performers brought the party into the audience with a German Christmas tune sung in English. Many women in the audience joined in the fun, laughing as they mimicked the choreography onstage: raising their arms to resemble a Christmas tree or playing patty cake.

After the troupe concluded with "Merry, Merry, Merry Christmas," the audience rose in a standing ovation.

"We thank you for a marvelous time," Jimena responded.

For more Sutter Street Theatre photos, visit therivervalleytimes.com. ★

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