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RIVER VALLEY TIMES

41ST YEAR • ISSUE 14

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Cripple Creek Draws Sell-out Crowd



Youngsters peep over the stage as The Cripple Creek Band performs to a sold-out crowd at the Lake Clementia Amphitheater on July 5. It was the second concert of the season sponsored by Entertainment, Theatre & Culture for Rancho Murieta (ETC).

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- The Cripple Creek Band delivered a crowd-pleasing performance of its Southern rock-inspired country music to a sold-out audience at the Clementia Amphitheater on July 5.

The show marked the second concert of the season presented by Entertainment, Theater & Culture for Rancho Murieta and the band's third appearance at an ETC event.

Board President and emcee JT Turner said the band brought the house down.

"Their energy, musicianship and connection



The Aerospace Museum of California presents a flyover by Rick Launey's experimental plane "Miss America" as the loudspeakers blare "God Bless the U.S.A." by Lee Greenwood.

with the crowd were off the charts," he said. "They gave us a night to remember."

Program

Another memorable moment came before the performance, when Turner asked all past and present members of the military to stand. He then invited their families, friends and supporters to join them,

prompting nearly the entire audience to rise. A strong sense of patriotism filled the amphitheater as Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." played and the crowd sang along.

The culmination was a dramatic flyover by Rick Launey's experimental plane, "Miss America," trailing fluffy smoke above the venue.

"Last year we had to

skip it due to the heat," Turner said. "When she's up there, we all feel like the skies are celebrating."

Launey, contacted afterward, said he's been flying over Rancho Murieta for a dozen years as part of the July 4 festivities.

"It's a wonderful thing for the community to celebrate our history," he said.

Students from the Murieta Dance Company performed a lyrical piece titled "The Dance." Director Doreen Zimmermann said she gave the song to her Contemporary/Lyrical Choreography team in January, challenging them to create their own routine based on what they had learned.

"I loved seeing them

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Supervisor Secures Funding for Scott Road Repaving



District 4 Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez secured welcome funding for Scott Road. File photo by Gail Bullen

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- A longtime advocate for improvements to Scott Road is praising Sacramento County Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez for allocating \$2.9 million to repave a three-mile section of the rural route.

John Merchant, who has pushed for upgrades to the road for two decades, said Rodriguez's action marks the first significant step after years of unmet promises.

"Is it everything? No. Is it something? Hell, yes; it is something. It's a big something," he said.

Scott Road winds through rolling ranch land and is the primary route Rancho Murieta residents use to reach Folsom for shopping, services and work.

Matt Hedges, the chief of staff for Rodriguez, announced the funding decision on social media.

"As many of you know, Scott Road is in rough shape," he said. "While a full realignment is ultimately needed, we recognize that immediate repairs can't wait."

Each year, the county's five supervisors submit a list of paving priorities to be funded under the Senate Bill 1 Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017. Hedges said Rodriguez selected four projects, one of which is the significant investment in Scott Road.

"The most expensive of the four, this project will completely repave the intersection at Boys Ranch Road and continue north along Scott Road for approximately three miles, up to where the new section begins," Hedges said. "The total cost is projected at \$2.9 million."

Hedges said Rodriguez represents numerous communities with pressing needs, including Orangevale, Antelope and North Highlands, "but she wanted to make a meaningful investment in Rancho Murieta this year," he said.

Merchant echoed that

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Audit Problems Persist After Finance Director's Departure

**Story and photo by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - When accountant Mark Matulich was hired as director of finance and administration for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District on Oct. 30, 2023, he appeared poised to bring order to the district's troubled finances and complete its long-overdue audits.

Since his departure, however, board and Finance Committee meetings in May, June and July have revealed an increasingly murky picture of his work.

Although the 2022-23 and 2023-24 audits took far longer than Matulich initially estimated, his explanations were generally accepted by the board and meeting attendees. He said the financial records for those years were in such disarray that it was better to re-enter all transactions from scratch than to try to untangle them. He also told the board he was improving the day-to-day accounting practices based on lessons learned. As the same time, Matulich was handling



Cynthia Minn, the interim director of finance and administration, provides an update at a Rancho Murieta Community Services District Finance Committee meeting. She replaced Mark Matulich after he resigned May 1.

myriad other issues that included taking over the security department.

Following Matulich's resignation on May 1, the board promptly hired an interim director of finance and administration to complete the audits and manage daily accounting operations.

Cynthia Min, a certified public accountant and temporary employee from the Robert Half consulting firm, was assigned to the role. She began working on the district's books with the assistance of existing staff and two junior accountants from Robert Half who had been hired earlier to help Matulich re-input financial data for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

At Min's request, Board President John Merchant also approved the hiring of a third junior accountant to begin work on the 2024-25 fiscal year records earlier this month.

As Min began presenting detailed audit updates to the board and finance committee in May, June and July, her reports revealed an increasing list of issues that were delaying the process.

Financial Reports

Min delivered her first report on May 6, just days after being hired. She said the 2021-22 audit was underway and that preparation for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 audits was only about 40% complete: a

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Goose Striking Power Lines Sparks Wildland Fire

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- A goose striking power lines sparked a wildland fire that burned 24.2 acres of grassland southeast of Rancho Murieta on July 11, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

Public Information Officer Wendy Oaks said the fire was reported around 5:45 p.m. on private property on the south side of the Cosumnes River. CAL FIRE responded with six fire engines, two bulldozers, three hand crews and two air tankers that dropped retardant.

Oaks said she didn't have the exact resource count for the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, which made the initial attack, but believed it included a helicopter and a

bulldozer.

CAL FIRE maintained resources on the scene overnight and into the following day for mop-up operations.

"The fire is still in patrol status – checking it at least once a day," Oaks said on July 14.

In an early report to the news media, CAL FIRE Capt. Wilbourne Parker said the fire was burning in light, flashy fuels across three to five acres and was threatening two barns. He reported at 6:37 p.m. that firefighters had stopped the forward progress and identified the fire's location as the Schneider Ranch.

Earlier the same day, Sac Metro Fire also responded to a separate barn fire on Meta Court in Sloughhouse.

That fire was reported just before 2:38 a.m. by a Rancho Murieta resident driving home on Jackson Highway. ★



An aerial photo shows the area southeast of Rancho Murieta where a 24-acre wildland fire broke out around 5:45 p.m. on July 11. CAL FIRE said the blaze was sparked by a goose striking power lines. Photo courtesy of CAL FIRE

Resident First to Report Sloughhouse Barn Fire

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

SLOUGHHOUSE, CA (MPG) - A Rancho Murieta resident was the first to raise the alarm about an early morning fire that destroyed a barn on Meta Court in Sloughhouse on July 11.

Jefferson Chantry was driving home around 2:30 a.m. when he noticed a bright orange glow and rising smoke on the north side of Jackson Highway.

"When it came into view, it looked like a structure," he said. Chantry initially

thought it might be a home because of outdoor lights in front of the building.

Realizing there were no fire department lights at the scene and little traffic on Jackson Highway, Chantry feared the fire hadn't yet been reported.

"I didn't know whether it was a home or not, but I was really worried for the people because they could be asleep," he said.

After a 911 operator confirmed he was the first to report the fire, "I just kind of sat there and filmed it (on his phone) while I was waiting for the fire department," he said. His video is posted online

at facebook.com/reel/1426951541972009/

Chantry estimated the fire had been burning for 5 to 10 minutes before he spotted it, and at that point, it was about half the size shown in his video. Within 6 minutes, he said, the flames had doubled.

He stayed to watch until the fire department arrived.

"It collapsed once they started getting water on it," he said.

Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District Captain Wilbourn Parker confirmed the structure had been destroyed.

"It was an isolated barn fire," he said.

"There were no additional threats to structures, animals or vegetation.

"The barn was a total loss and was fully involved in flames when crews from Metro Fire and Wilton Fire arrived," Parker added. The cause is under investigation.

Chantry said he realized it would take time for the fire department to reach the blaze on Meta Court after checking maps on his phone.

The only access to that area of homes is via Flagstaff Road off Latrobe Road, and Meta Court is the street farthest from the entrance.

This story is also online at therivervalleytimes.com and at Facebook.com/therivervalleytimes. ★



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Booth Decries Board's Response to Allegations by Ex-GM Morris

Story and photo by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Steve Booth, who resigned as a Rancho Murieta Community Services District director in May, has publicly criticized the board's handling of an investigation into an employee complaint filed against him by former General Manager Mimi Morris.

Booth raised the issue at the board's July 16 meeting, citing a "closure letter" summarizing the investigation's findings that he received the day before.

"The district has determined that you did not engage in unlawful hostile workplace harassment, specifically, the investigation determined there was insufficient evidence to sustain the allegations against you," the letter stated.

Although the result didn't surprise Booth, "it raised serious questions to which the community deserves answers from this board," he told the board.

The rift between Morris and Booth first became public in January. After the other board members approved a \$375,000 settlement with her on May 12, Morris agreed to resign and Booth unexpectedly resigned at the next meeting.

Booth's Critique

Booth spoke during public comments at the beginning of the July



Former Director Steve Booth speaks at the July 16 Rancho Murieta Community Services District board meeting, challenging how the board handled a complaint filed against him by former General Manager Mimi Morris.

meeting. He said that "after seven months of inexplicable delay, he had been informed on June 27 that the board had received a summary of the findings.

"The allegations were found to be without merit; the comments and actions complained about were found to be legitimate business inquiries," he said. "All contested actions were found not to be discriminatory and not retaliatory," Booth said. These findings were confirmed in the "closure letter" sent to him on July 15.

Booth outlined his criticism of board actions in a series of pointed questions.

"One. Why did it take over seven months for the investigation to be completed?"

"Two. Why was Morris permitted to refuse to be interviewed by the investigator for five and a half months, even though a public employer has the absolute right to direct an employee to be interviewed in an internal investigation at a time and

place set by the employer?"

"Three. Why was Morris given \$375,000 of this community's money, as her complaints were found to be without merit?"

"Four. How was that decision made?"

"Five. Why was the commitment to give Morris \$375,000 made months before the investigation was completed and the results of the investigation were known?"

"Six. Why was only one board member (Booth) excluded from the discussion regarding the complaints and potential for settlement when two other board members (directors John Merchant and Linda Butler) were mentioned in the government claim as well?"

Booth said the explanation that settling was more cost-effective than litigation did not hold up, given that the investigation found no merit in Morris' complaint.

He noted that the core of her complaint - his comments during the Nov. 20

board meeting - would likely have been subject to an early dismissal motion under California's anti-SLAPP statute, which protects speech made in a public forum on matters of public interest.

"The attorneys representing CSD should have had a discussion about that principle with the board," he said.

Booth concluded by urging the board to provide the community with answers to the questions he raised.

None of the board members present - Butler, Tim Maybee or newly appointed Director William Gere - responded to Booth's questions. Under the Brown Act, board members are not required to respond to public comments, although they may if they choose to do so.

Background

The conflict between Morris and Booth became public on Jan. 6 during a special board meeting to evaluate her performance. Before the board entered

closed session - without Booth - Morris accused him of retaliation, discrimination and harassment. She also revealed that she had filed an internal complaint against him following the Nov. 20 board meeting.

During the closed session on Jan. 6, the board voted 4-0 to place Morris on administrative leave pending an investigation. The next day, Booth told The River Valley Times, "I categorically deny that there has been any discrimination against her for any reason."

Morris alleged that Booth pressured her to return to in-office work despite having a medical condition and defamed her by criticizing her performance during the November board meeting.

On Jan. 8, her attorney filed a government claim against the district, expanding her allegations against Booth. It also listed District Counsel Patrick Enright and directors Merchant and Butler as district employees causing injury.

Under California law, a government claim against a public agency must be made before filing a lawsuit against it. On Feb. 19, the board voted 4-0 to deny Morris' claim, clearing the path for legal action.

On March 14, the board met in closed session without Booth and later announced Morris would return from leave. She resumed her duties on March 24. That same day, Booth informed the district he would no longer attend district meetings.

Following a closed session at the May 12 meeting, Merchant announced that the board had voted to 3-0 to reach a settlement with Morris. Booth and Randy Jenco didn't attend the meeting.

The settlement totaled \$375,000, with \$175,000 covered by the district's insurer, Golden State Risk Management Authority, and \$200,000 paid directly by the district. As part of the settlement, Morris agreed to resign.

After resuming his role as board president at the May 21 meeting, Booth unexpectedly announced his resignation at the conclusion of the session. He cited the settlement agreement with Morris, saying it allowed her to leave without having to prove "the false allegations she has made" or provide him the opportunity to disprove them.

This story is also online at therivervalleytimes.com and at [Facebook.com/therivervalleytimes](https://www.facebook.com/therivervalleytimes). ★

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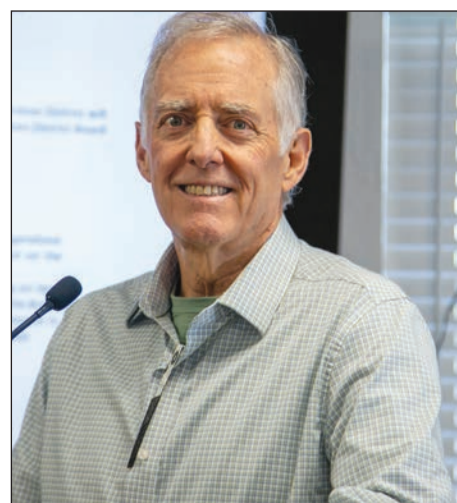
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Services District Board Appoints Gere as Director



William Gere answers questions at a special Rancho Murieta Community Services District board meeting to appoint a new director held on July 16.



District Secretary Amelia Wilder administers the oath of office.

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Although William Gere was the only applicant for a vacancy on the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board, the three directors present at a special meeting on July 16 appeared pleased to appoint him.

At the end of the meeting, the board voted 3-0 to fill the seat left vacant by Steve Booth's May 21 resignation. Voting in favor were directors Linda Butler, John Merchant and Tim Maybee. Director Randy Jenco did not attend.

The directors seemed especially impressed by Gere's 12 years of service as a U.S. Army infantry officer and his experience with governance in the small town of Hollister. He holds a bachelor's degree in the administration of justice, which he said was "strongly rooted in public administration."

Gere submitted a letter of intent and written responses to standard questions as part of his application. In past board meetings to appoint new directors – especially

when multiple candidates are involved – directors have typically asked additional questions during the public session.

This time, only Director Tim Maybee came prepared with a list of questions, although he opened on a light note.

"Thank you for stepping forward," Maybee said. "This is a great gig. Everybody loves you, and you can't make anybody mad."

Maybee began by asking Gere about the chain of command.

"As a board member, are you allowed to go directly to staff or do you work through the general manager?" he asked.

Gere began with a preface.

"I've noticed that there are a lot of board members here who interact very directly with staff, and I've never seen it that way," he said.

In his past experience, board members went through the city manager first.

"Then if it's a detailed question, then the city manager or general manager can bring the department head into the room, and the board members can hash it out that way."

Asked about his expectations of a general manager, Gere said the most

important role is overseeing department heads and monitoring their staff, "and making sure the staff isn't tripping up."

Asked about his commitment to the position, Gere said the time demand wouldn't be a problem, as he had retired a year and a half ago.

"I'm looking for something to keep me entertained," he joked.

When Maybee asked about his background, Gere said he had a varied career, including 12 years as a U.S. Army officer, both on active duty and in the reserves.

Gere said he ran his own business at the Hollister Airport for 10 years.

"So out of my own self-defense, I showed up at every single city council meeting because there was always somebody who wanted to have a flea market on the runways all weekend, which would have impacted me greatly," Gere said.

He made a point of getting to know all the city council members.

"Watching the city council and the CSD Board is great theater," he said. "So you watch and see how things are working."

After selling his business, the city council asked him to serve as airport manager,

a role he held for several years while his children were finishing high school. This time, he attended council meetings as a department head.

"I have seen both sides of the spectrum," he said. "So, I think I am prepared."

Director Linda Butler said she was glad Gere was committing to the board and willing to take part in all its activities, which she noted can be very time-consuming.

Director John Merchant said he didn't have any questions because he had already spoken with Gere twice.

"I'm really glad you stepped up," he said. "Quite honestly, I don't know what we would do if you didn't because you are a party of one."

Audience member Tom Shewchuk suggested the board delay the appointment until Director Randy Jenco could participate. Merchant responded that such a delay wouldn't work due to statutory time requirements.

Merchant noted that Gere will serve the remainder of Booth's term and will be up for election in November 2026, when all five board seats will be on the ballot.

Following the unanimous vote, the district secretary administered the oath of office.

Gere's application materials are available in the board packet for the July 16 special meeting on the district's website. An audio recording of the meeting has also been posted.

This story is online at [Facebook.com/therivervalleytimes](https://www.facebook.com/therivervalleytimes) and [therivervalleytimes.com](https://www.therivervalleytimes.com). ★

Supervisor Secures Funding for Scott Road Repaving

Continued from page 1
sentiment, emphasizing the importance of the funding. He said receiving "a pretty good chunk of money" was noteworthy, considering that District 4 has tens of thousands of voters, but only about 4,400 of them live in Rancho Murieta.

Merchant said around 70 people

responded to Hedges' social media post, many voicing frustration over the current condition of the road. He has spent the past 20 years studying Scott Road and advocating for its improvement. Full reconstruction would be highly complex and expensive, particularly in the hilly segments where visibility and drainage are

major concerns, he said.

"When we combine the Prairie City Road connection to what they plan to pave in this first pass, we are getting a significant portion of this road taken care of," he said. "Accept the gift for what it is, and we will go from here."

Merchant played a key role in securing

earlier funding that realigned Scott Road to connect with Prairie City Road at the White Rock Road intersection.

This story is also online at [therivervalleytimes.com](https://www.therivervalleytimes.com) and at [Facebook.com/therivervalleytimes](https://www.facebook.com/therivervalleytimes). ★

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RMA Board Discusses E-bike Safety Concerns

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

The unsafe operation of electric bicycles behind the gates was the primary topic when the Rancho Murieta Association board met on July 15.

Directors also addressed a range of other issues during the 46-minute session: the shortest meeting in recent memory. Topics included improving security at the front gates, lessons learned from the July 4 parade and a proposal to place a kiosk-based pharmacy in Rancho Murieta. Director Danny Carrillo didn't attend the meeting.

E-Bikes

Director Scott Adams raised the issue of electric bicycles during his report on the Governing Documents Committee, which he chairs.

Adams said it was time to draft a new rule in response to numerous complaints from residents and social media posts about kids riding e-bikes dangerously behind the gates. Adams noted the complexity of the issue, explaining that e-bikes vary by class and speed, which makes enforcement difficult. He added that identifying the bikes is also a challenge, since they aren't required to have barcodes or other forms of identification. Adams cautioned that writing the rule could take several months.

Director Chris Childs said it was essential for the community to understand that the board's concerns do not include adults safely riding e-bikes on the streets



The unsafe operation of electric bicycles is a primary topic at the Rancho Murieta Association board meeting July 15, with particular concern about young teens riding e-bikes dangerously. Photo courtesy of Himiway Bikes

or "little kids riding electric scooters."

He said the proposed rule is aimed at a group of underage riders on electric dirt bikes who are recklessly speeding through the community, trespassing on private property, using expletives, evading compliance officers and creating dangerous situations for residents and property alike.

"We are talking about behavior that I consider to be delinquent," Childs said.

President Patrick O'Hern shared an anecdote about an encounter with two juvenile e-bike riders who weren't wearing helmets on Murieta South Parkway.

"They popped a wheelie and went down the hill and up Colbert Drive," he said. "They probably went three-quarters of the way to the golf course before they put it down."

O'Hern said the riders not only endangered themselves but also created hazards for motorists who had to slam on their brakes

to avoid hitting them. "So, it created a whole bunch of hazards for our members," he said.

Other Business

Childs, who chairs the Perimeter Security Ad Hoc Committee, said the group has developed preliminary plans to improve security at both front gates. They have asked staff to analyze two key aspects: property ownership and cost estimates. Childs said he expects to present the report at the August meeting.

Hart and Director John Haviland, who chairs the Recreation Committee, both commented on the July 4 parade. Hart, who said he has worked in the community for 45 years, noted he had never seen so many parade entries. He also thanked the volunteers who helped with the event, including every RMA board member present at the meeting.

Haviland said the Recreation Committee realized that placing the



Director Scott Adams announces that the Governing Documents Committee is drafting a rule on electric bicycles to address safety concerns. Photo by Gail Bullen



Resident Robert Guerin announces that a healthcare company plans to install a kiosk-based pharmacy in Rancho Murieta. Photo by Gail Bullen



Resident Brian Rosebrock asks for help navigating RMA procedures so he can seek resident approval for a rule change to allow motorcycles on the North side. Photo by Gail Bullen

vintage cars at the front of the parade helped prevent candy from being smashed, making it easier to pick up. He also reported that one entry used a confetti gun, and the resulting paper debris couldn't be fully cleaned by the street sweeper because the confetti landed in bushes and medians. He said the committee is considering banning confetti guns next year due to the mess they created.

During his general manager's report, Rod Hart briefly discussed Assembly Bill 130, which took effect July 1. He said the board is reviewing the bill's language with legal counsel to determine how it can continue to address speed violations while maintaining community safety and complying with the new law. The bill limits homeowners associations

to fines of no more than \$100, except in limited circumstances.

During public comments, Robert Guerin announced that a healthcare company, Med n RX, has selected Rancho Murieta as the site of a "smart pharmacy" to be operated from a kiosk. He did not provide further details.

Audience member Dave Walters informed the board that the local post of Veterans of Foreign Wars plans to seek approval to install patriotic benches throughout the community.

Audience member Brian Rosebrock, who has long opposed the rule barring motorcycles on the North, asked for help understanding the process for proposing a rule change. President Patrick O'Hern advised him to meet with General Manager Rod

Hart.

Adams said the Governing Documents Committee also sought approval of a rule change that had already completed a 30-day review. The new rule requires residents to report the issuance of new license plates to a gate officer within 14 days. The board approved the change in a 6-0 vote.

The board voted to hold the annual meeting on Nov. 20 and set Sept. 10 as the record date for determining ownership. Directors also approved John Van Doren as chair of the Nominating Committee and appointed resident Jim Moore as elections inspector.

The next RMA board meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Aug. 19.

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Gates Open 7:00pm
Lake Clementia
Members \$30.00
Non-Members \$40.00

CHILDREN 6 & UNDER FREE
\$5.00 surcharge at the gate, so buy your tickets early!

ETC Members/Sponsors enjoy priority blanket setting from 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM. General admission blanket setting from 10:00 AM – 12:00 Noon.

Closed 12:00 Noon – 7:00 PM. Gates open at 7:00 PM. Come early to avoid long lines. Concert starts promptly at 8:30. No Refunds – No Exchanges.

Events open to Rancho Murieta residents, real property owners and their guests, ETC sponsors and Rancho Murieta business owners. Tickets available at Ace Hardware and ETC ticket tables.

Note: Discounted tickets for ETC Members are only available at Ace Hardware and ETC ticket tables.

Membership Info: Joelle Maggio 951-544-0858

For the safety of the children and ALL concert attendees:
CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED & SUPERVISED BY AN ADULT AT ALL TIMES.
No running or racing around the grounds, blankets, or dance floor.

Keeping the Arts Alive in Our Community!

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Kiwanis Club Opening Sale of Farm to Fork Tickets

Ticket sales for the Kiwanis Farm to Fork Dinner at Rancho Murieta Country Club will start on Monday, Aug. 11 at rmkiwanis.org. Tickets are \$80 each plus a \$2.75 processing fee. Tables will accommodate 10 people and

“tickets bought together, sit together.” We are also looking for all the talented Table Hostesses out there who provided a centerpiece for their table and are willing to help out again.

For more information, or to volunteer to be a Table Hostess, and/or to pay by cash or check, please contact Carol Prinzo

at 916-354-9688 or Jeannette Edwards at 408-515-2636.

Pickleball Club Slates Car Show, Chili Cookoff

The Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club will host its Hot August Nights Car Show and Chili Cookoff on from noon to 4

p.m. Saturday, Aug. 9 at Stonehouse Park. Awards will be given for the best cars and chili.

The event is open only to Rancho Murieta residents and their guests. The entry fee is \$20 for Pickleball Club members and \$25 for nonmembers. To sign up, email machfive911@yahoo.com. ★

Audit Problems Persist After Finance Director's Departure

Continued from page 1

surprising revelation, given that Matulich had reported in April that most of that work was finished.

Min's June updates surprised further concern when she reported significant challenges with the 2021-22 audit, which had already been submitted to the auditing firm. After sending a list of outstanding items to the district in February, the auditors received no response and were preparing to move on to another client until Min intervened. To keep the auditors engaged, she suspended all work on the 2022-23 and 2023-24 audit preparations and redirected all accounting staff and other district employees to focus on resolving the 2021-22 audit issues.

Min's update at the July 10 Finance Committee meeting – which she repeated at the July 16 board meeting – painted an even more troubling picture. She reported additional problems with the 2021-22 audit and outlined a series of ongoing financial issues. These included reconciling about \$800,000 in discrepancies in the already completed 2020-21 audit, database problems and inadequate fixed asset accounting that required

a \$1 million adjustment. Other issues included mishandled developer fees, unread fire hydrant meters, a \$263,000 overstatement in the accounts payable aging report and a \$78,000 understatement in the Water Treatment Plant loan balance.

On a happier note, Min reported that she should wrap up the last piece needed for the 2021-22 audit by the first week in August. She also provided an eight-page list of recommendations to fix the significant problems that she and the staff encountered so far.

Min's recommendations included having front office staff enter miscellaneous deposits and payroll directly into the district's existing Great Plains accounting system, rather than using Excel spreadsheets: a practice Matulich had continued after his arrival. Min said direct entry would eliminate the need for the district accountant to re-enter spreadsheet data into the system, freeing him to resume monthly balance sheet reconciliations, which had not been occurring regularly.

Her recommendations about improving developer deposits accounting will

require far more work.

Min emphasized at both July meetings that her top priority remains completing the audit work – including the 2024-25 fiscal year – which will delay the implementation of her recommended improvements.

Speaking at the July 10 Finance Committee meeting, audience member Richard Gehrs expressed shock at the size of the adjustments and asked what they meant for the district's financial position.

Min and Merchant, who chairs the committee, assured him that the issues involved accounting reconciliations – not missing funds – and that efforts were underway to clean up the records and strengthen financial processes.

“I want to make it clear that there's not a million dollars floating around out there that we can't find,” Merchant said. “That's not what we're doing here.”

Min's detailed reports can be viewed online in the packets for the May, June and July board and Finance Committee meetings on the district's website.

This story is also online at therivervalleytimes.com and at [Facebook.com/therivervalleytimes](https://www.facebook.com/therivervalleytimes). ★

MEMORIAL

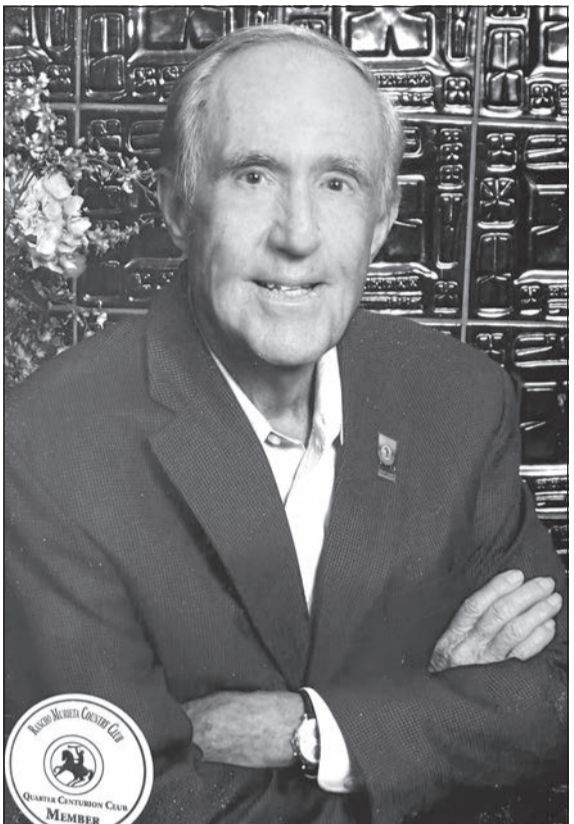
TED HART • 12/13/1930 - 07/16/2025

Ted Hart, 50-year resident of Rancho Murieta, passed away peacefully at his home overlooking the 17th fairway. Country Club Board President in the 1980s, Ted was dedicated to the community, as evidenced by his consistent presence at RMCC, CSD and RMA meetings. Even into his nineties, you could find him at the podiums.

Born in Denver, Colorado, Ted's was not your average childhood. Enterprising from the start, when in first grade, the family having moved to Los Angeles, he made his spending money selling magazines. Not door to door, however. With their apartment near several bars, he figured out quickly that a cute little kid could do better selling to the patrons occupying the stools.

Ted's most excellent childhood adventure was ignited by the labor shortage during World War II. With little help to operate his Wyoming ranch, a family friend requested that Ted work there for the summer of '44. He soon found himself operating machinery; calf-pulling; branding; castrating; harvesting wheat and loving every minute of it.

During the Korean war, Ted served as a signalman on the U.S.S. Gregory, a destroyer. Their assignment in Wonsan Harbor, Korea in the winter of 1951



was to bomb the shoreline and pluck downed pilots out of the sea.

Ted was very proud of his service, and in the last several years spent every Tuesday at the Veterans Golf Program at Mather coaching wounded veterans.

Ted spent most of his working life in the glazing industry. Moving to San Jose in 1963, he started Hart Glass Company, which took part in the explosion of industrial development that was to become Silicon Valley.

Ted first noticed the love of his life, Dixie, when he was in eighth grade. She made quite an impression, because it was then he told her that he

was going to marry her. They did so on November 22, 1950. Through their 80-plus years together, Dixie was the sweet smile at his side. She made a wonderful home for him and their children, Susan, Steve, and Jeannie. And when they came along, also their seven grandchildren and thirteen great-grandchildren.

Children of magical orange-blossom and gardenia-scented Southern California, when asked about their childhoods, Ted and Dixie would respond, “Who wouldn't want to live in Hollywood?”

From that beginning and all the way through to the years in Rancho Murieta, for Ted it was a wonderful life.



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Community Services District Board Approves Well Study, HR Contract

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Although the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board faced a relatively light agenda on July 16, three issues stood out.

Interim Director of Finance and Administration Cecelia Min reported making significant financial adjustments – up to \$1 million in discrepancies – as she and her team work to complete overdue audits. (See the separate story on audits in this issue.)

Former Director Steve Booth spoke during public comment, raising concerns about an investigation report regarding allegations made by former General Manager Mimi Morris. The report found

the complaints to be without merit. (See the separate story in this issue.)

In a special meeting held prior to the regular session, the board appointed Rancho Murieta resident William Gere to fill the vacancy left by Booth's resignation. (See the separate story in this issue.) Gere participated in the regular meeting that followed. Director Randy Jenco was absent.

In other business, the board approved an \$80,700 contract with Water System Consultants to conduct a well study aimed at identifying strategic locations for future water sources, without drilling any test wells.

The board also approved a contract with HR to Go to help address the district's significant human resources challenges. The

agreement will cost \$3,350 per month, with a monthly cap of \$6,700.

The board approved a \$32,530 engagement letter with Richardson and Company to provide audit services for another year, helping to maintain continuity as the district works through the challenges of completing overdue audits.

A significantly larger expenditure was the approval of a \$163,000 purchase of 86 membranes for the water treatment plant. The membranes will be delivered during the winter, when water demand is lower, and installed immediately upon arrival.

The board also discussed the equipment and responsibilities of patrol officers, especially the need for clear job descriptions and a better understanding of the liability associated with providing security

services. One outcome of the discussion was the board's agreement that body-worn cameras should be the only district-issued equipment.

IT Manager Andy Lee also briefed the board on several matters, including the rollout of new phones and ongoing issues with the surveillance camera system that require resolution.

A board packet containing details on these topics, along with an audio recording of the meeting, is available on the district's website.

The board's next regular meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m. Aug. 20.

This story is also online at theriver-valleytimes.com and at [Facebook.com/therivervalleytimes](https://www.facebook.com/therivervalleytimes). ★

Garden Club Wins National Award

By Nancy Compton
River Valley Garden Club

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The River Valley Garden Club has earned first place in the nation in the Community Impact award category from National Garden Clubs, Inc., recognizing its work to rebuild and refurbish the school garden at Cosumnes River Elementary School.

The prestigious national honor followed a series of accolades at regional and state levels. After winning first place in California at the 95th annual statewide convention of California Garden Clubs, Inc., the club's project advanced through the Pacific Region Garden Clubs, which encompasses eight western states, before being named the top Community Impact project in the country.

All of the awards presented this year were for



River Valley Garden Club members and Scouts from Troop 633 gather for a photo as they rehabilitate the gardens at Cosumnes River Elementary in February 2024. Courtesy photos



This photo shows the revitalization of the gardens following the 2024 project. The Scouts made additional improvements to the gardens in 2025 as part of Alex Hoberg's Eagle Scout project.

activities that took place last year.

The local effort began in Spring 2024 when the club's Community Service Team learned the school garden had been neglected and left unused.

Team chair Berniece

Jones led the initiative, rallying club members, Scout Troop 633, school staff, local businesses and community volunteers to help bring the space back to life.

During the dedicated workdays, the volunteers pulled weeds, replaced

crumbling concrete blocks, and prepared the site for mulch, fresh soil, and bark along the garden paths. Scout Troop 633 provided much-needed muscle, while teachers, parents and garden club members joined in the hands-on

effort. Community generosity played a key role in the project's success.

A Wilton resident donated mulch, a local nursery provided soil, and a start-up fertilizer company in Ione contributed

fertilizer, all helping to keep the project affordable and community-driven.

The club appreciates the community volunteers, businesses and donors that made this award and the school garden club project possible. ★

Girl Scouts Experience Civic Engagement at State Capitol

Girl Scouts Heart of Central California News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Girl Scouts Heart of Central California (GSHCC) was proud to welcome Girl Scouts from across the state for a two-day educational experience centered on civic engagement and advocacy.

This immersive event, which took place on June 19 and 20, was open to Girl Scouts in grades four through 12 and designed to inspire the next generation of changemakers by connecting them directly with government and public service.

Participants engaged in hands-on workshops, toured the historic State Capitol, met with legislators and took part in panel discussions, featuring elected officials and leaders in civic life. The experience empowers girls to explore how the government works, understand their role in a democracy and develop their voices as



Girl Scouts pose in the California State Senate during their two-day event on June 19 and 20. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts Heart of Central California

advocates for the issues they care about.

"This event gives girls a rare opportunity to see government in action and to realize that they, too, can lead and make a difference in their communities," said Adriana Pedroza,

associate director of girl experience at Girl Scouts Heart of Central California.

Girl Scouts Heart of Central California is dedicated to building girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.

Through various programs and initiatives, the organization empowers girls to take the lead in their lives and communities.

Headquartered in Sacramento, Girl Scouts Heart of Central California serves over 16,000 girl and adult

members across 18 counties, including Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Colusa, El Dorado, Glenn, Mariposa, Merced, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tuolumne, Yolo and Yuba. ★



Girl Scouts listen to a tour guide outside of the Governor's Office at the State Capitol Building during their two-day event on June 19 and 20. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts Heart of Central California



Girl Scouts listen attentively while inside the California State Senate during their two-day event on June 19 and 20. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts Heart of Central California



Above right: The electronic sign in the California State Senate says, "The California State Senate Welcomes Girl Scouts." Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts Heart of Central California

Right: Girl Scouts listen attentively while inside the California State Senate during their two-day event on June 19 and 20. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts Heart of Central California

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Summer league has grown exponentially, and fans are tuned in today like never before.

Sunday night saw our Sacramento Kings vying for their third summer league championship, as they faced off with the Charlotte Hornets in Las Vegas Nevada.

With identical 5-0 records the Kings got a dose of what their first and second round draft choices were capable of, so it remained to be seen how they would perform when the lights were brightest.

After an auspicious summer league audition, Nique Clifford struggled finding his shooting stroke, and had just 4 points entering the fourth quarter. The Kings would never give up on this game. After being down by 18 points, the young squad fought back to a single point deficit with less than 2 minutes remaining.

A pass from Isaac Jones to Clifford well beyond the arc, and Nique did not disappoint draining a deep three. Clifford followed up with an acrobatic jump shot in the corner for another three, and the Kings looked like winners.

Charlotte would not go quietly as sharpshooter Kon Knueppel pulled up for a back breaking three. Moving the ball quickly into the frontcourt Isaac Jones sized up his first 3-point shot of the night and when Isaac converted the three the Kings were knocking on the door once again.

Kings fans can be proud of how the team fought for a win that ultimately would escape them, as a much needed rebound careened off the foot of Isaac Jones, and the Kings would go on to lose 83-78.

Neither the loss of the game nor the championship is the real story. The Sacramento Kings got more than just a glimpse of what their first and second round draft choices are capable of.

Talented, for sure and yes, they are raw. Nique Clifford put together a string of games that stated loudly, I've arrived and ready to make a difference!

Although I don't like using that word, Maxime Raynaud is more of a project. Raynaud, like every rookie, is going to need extended playing time, and time to play through his mistakes.

What the Kings really wanted to know, is can this 7'1" big man make an impact and play alongside Domantas Sabonis. I believe

he can, but confidence building is what will determine how quickly Maxime Raynaud will arrive.

Not to be left behind was the electric play of second year man Isaac Jones, who coming off a stellar 36-point performance, led all scores again with a 24-point performance. Jones made his lone 3-point attempt and added 11 big boards while chipping in with 2 assists.

Isaac Jones summer league performance came as no surprise to me. What's sad is the lack of playing time he received in his rookie year. It's my hope, as Isaac is receiving accolades from other coaches and pundits, that the staff pay close attention to what is possible.

Jones 6'9" frame and 7'3" wingspan make him a difficult guard for any team. He has a definite knack around the rim. He's active, and if he finds himself in a rotation that gives him 20 minutes plus per game, look for both Isaac and the Kings to take a step forward.

There is much to shout about as the Kings close out their summer league schedule. The confident presence that Nique Clifford brought every night is one of many things to be happy about.

Nique lived up to his billing as he played hard at both ends of the court, and like Isaac Jones, Clifford will need to find his place on the team that gets him minutes every game.

Doug Christie has his work cut out for him with a crowded guard rotation, including second year man Devin Carter, who acquitted himself admirably and played dominantly. Devin needs to continue working on his shot, but the upside for Carter is huge. No need for the Kings to question their decision to draft a player that could only contribute half a season due to injury. Carter is winning fans with every game he plays. I look for Devin to be more than just a contributor in the upcoming season.

Yes, Kings fans, you got what you were hoping for, and without a doubt this summer league squad has got the city of Sacramento excited.

Scott Perry isn't done just yet, so stay tuned Kings fans!

All the best!

Your thoughts are always welcome at vgarris@riskingsfan@gmail.com. ★

Social Security Matters

What is the Formula for Deciding When to Claim?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I am curious about the "formula" to decide when to take Social Security while still working. I am past the Full Retirement Age. How do you best address such? Should we schedule a call? **Signed: Wondering When**

Dear Wondering: Well, you can always contact us by phone on 1.888.750.2622 to speak to one of our certified Social Security Advisors, or you can send your questions to us via email at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. You don't need to pre-schedule a meeting, as we have multiple advisors answering the phone on most normal business days. If they all happen to be busy when you call, simply leave a voicemail and an Advisor will return your call promptly.

For starters, since you have reached your full retirement age, know that your work earnings will no longer negatively affect your Social Security benefits. You can earn as much as possible, and your monthly SS amount will be the same, based on your average lifetime monthly earnings (for your highest 35 years), and based on your age when you claim.

Since you have not yet claimed SS, you are already earning Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) which increase your monthly SS amount by .667% for each month you continue to delay. That's 8% for each full year you delay past your full retirement age (FRA). You should not, however, wait longer than age 70 to claim because that is when you will get your maximum SS benefit amount. For you, that means that your age 70 amount will be 28% more than the amount you would have received at your FRA of 66 years and 6 months (in Oct. 2023), and about 15% more than if you were to claim now.

Note too, that if your more recent income is among the highest of your lifetime, Social Security will automatically increase your monthly SS retirement amount to account for that event. They will check your work earnings each year to see if you are entitled to a larger SS amount because of your recent earnings.

Since (according to your AMAC member record) you are married, you may also wish to consider whether your wife will get a spousal benefit from you when you claim. If your wife's personal SS retirement amount at her FRA is less than the amount you were entitled to at your FRA, then she will get a spousal boost when you claim. With her spousal boost (if claimed at her FRA), her total SS benefit should be about 50% of your FRA benefit amount (not half of the higher amount you will get because you waited longer to claim).

But your wife cannot get a spousal boost until you are collecting your SS.

And here is something else to think about: received SS benefits will become part of your overall income taxed by the IRS when you submit your income tax return. If you file your income tax as "married/jointly" and your combined income from all sources is more than \$32,000 then some of your SS benefits will become taxable income. If your combined income is between \$32,001 and \$44,000, then half of the SS benefits you received during the tax year becomes part of your taxable income. Or, if your combined income from all sources exceeds \$44,000, then about 85% of your received SS benefits will become part of your income taxed by the IRS. Just something to keep in mind, especially since you are still working.

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It's Time to Cut Off Public Broadcasting

In the past, whenever Republicans have tried to cut federal funding for public broadcasting, the 8-foot-2-inch-tall yellow bird has been trotted out as an exemplar of all that is good and necessary about public broadcasting, and the federal dollars have been preserved.

Perhaps our Jim Henson-created feathered friend will continue his undefeated streak, but a Trump-backed recessions bill represents the best chance to defund public broadcasting in decades, if not ever.

The bill, clawing back previously appropriated funding, has already passed the House and is now being considered in the Senate, where the filibuster doesn't apply. The measure targets \$9.4 billion in federal spending, including funds for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The CPB gets about \$500 million a year from the federal government, and parcels it out to NPR, PBS and local public radio and TV stations.

NPR maintains that it only gets about 2% of its funding from the federal government, with more coming indirectly via member stations. PBS gets about 15% of its funding from the feds.

If NPR and PBS programming is as compelling and vital as its defenders say, it shouldn't be a heavy

lift to get foundations, philanthropists and devoted listeners and viewers to fill any funding gap. The organization's already given out a lot of tote bags during fundraising drives. Surely, they can give out some more.

Decades ago, with the rise of cable TV and a proliferation of sources of news and entertainment, it seemed absurd for the government to have to prop up a few select media sources. How much more ridiculous it is now, in the age of YouTube, social media, satellite radio, Substack, streaming services and podcast platforms.

Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Public Broadcasting Act, creating the CPB in 1967, and like many other Great Society programs, public broadcasting is an anachronism that won't go away. Big Bird himself is approaching the age when he'll soon begin to be eligible for senior-citizen discounts.

Supporters of public broadcasting extol the virtues of "All Things Considered," the "PBS NewsHour" and "Frontline," and yes (political bias aside), journalists do some good work for these programs. They also (again, political bias aside) do some good work at The New York Times and CBS News, yet neither of these outlets depend on federal tax dollars.

Oh, defenders also ask, How can we possibly do without the wonder of educational programming like "Sesame Street" and "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood"? "Sesame Street" is, indeed, an American institution. Even if PBS collapsed tomorrow, the show would certainly go on. For about a decade now, new epi-

sodes have been featured on HBO or Netflix, demonstrating how a venerable 50-year-old project can adapt to the times.

It's simply not true, by the way, that we depend on PBS for good shows for kids. There's been educational programming developed by Nickelodeon ("Blue's Clues & You!"), Scholastic Entertainment ("The Magic School Bus") and Netflix ("Ask the StoryBots" and "Ada Twist, Scientist"). And somehow, such iconic children's programming as "Dora the Explorer," "Peppa Pig" and "Bluey" were created without the involvement of PBS.

Then there's the argument that a cut-off of federal funding will be devastating to local public radio stations in rural communities. It's true that small stations could go out of business, but as anyone who has been paying attention has noticed, we live in an era of great media churn. Private media entities are going out of business -- and being created -- all the time. The government shouldn't extend its favor to a few select outlets. Especially when these outlets are so blatantly and pervasively biased. NPR and PBS provide left-of-center content for left-of-center audiences under the guise of objectivity. As many legacy media organizations have long demonstrated, there is a business model there, but it's not one that deserves or needs taxpayer support.

Big Bird should, finally, make his own way in the world.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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New California Budget Ignores Day of Reckoning



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

When Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders were drafting a more-or-less final 2025-26 state budget last month, they were closing what they described as a \$12 billion deficit, a number that the state's media repeatedly cited.

It was the wrong number; it minimizes the state's chronic gap between income and outgo, as the state's official budget summary released this week confirms.

The budget projects that the state will receive \$208.6 billion in general fund revenues during the fiscal year that began on July 1, but it will spend \$228.4 billion, a gap just shy of \$20 billion.

The \$12 billion figure stems from counting a \$7.1 billion diversion from one of the state's reserve accounts as revenue — an assumption that violates common sense as well as any legitimate accounting scenario.

The more accurate figure of \$20 billion is important because it squares with projections by Newsom's Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst's Office that California has what's called a "structural deficit" in the range of

\$10 billion to \$20 billion a year.

In other words financing all of the programs and services now in state law will indefinitely cost that much more each year than the state is likely to receive in revenues.

The budget closes about a third of the \$20 billion gap with an aforementioned \$7.1 billion shift from the emergency reserve — money that's supposed to be used to cushion the impact of an economic downturn or calamities such as the wildfires that devastated Los Angeles, earthquakes or destructive storms.

The deficit isn't a genuine emergency because it resulted from irresponsible political decisions, particularly Newsom's declaration in 2022 that the state had a \$97.5 billion budget surplus and thus could afford a sharp increase in spending.

The surplus was a mirage, based on assumptions of a \$40 billion annual increase in revenues that never happened. Last year, the Department of Finance acknowledged that revenues over four years would fall short of expectations by \$165 billion.

However, much of the phantom money was already spent, thereby creating the structural deficit that Newsom and the Legislature basically ignored in putting together the current budget.

The \$12 billion gap left after the reserve fund shift was mostly papered over with on- and off-budget loans from special funds, shifting some spending into future years and using

accounting gimmicks, such as shifting some current year spending, the June 2026 state payroll for instance, into the next fiscal year.

One could liken the state budget to a family that takes out loans on its credit cards to finance a lavish lifestyle, or a city that provides pension benefits it cannot afford.

Sooner or later, the debts pile so high that they can no longer be ignored and the day of reckoning arrives. That's one reason why more than 30,000 Californians file for bankruptcy each year and why several California cities have gone bankrupt in recent years.

States cannot file for bankruptcy, no matter how distorted their finances. If they could, California would not qualify because of its almost unlimited ability to borrow money from special funds.

However, there will be a day of judgment if California's spending continues to outpace its revenues, particularly if the state's economy continues its sluggish performance.

Newsom and legislators implicitly assume that at some point revenues will increase enough to cover their spending and pay off their debts — just as a debt-ridden family buys lottery tickets in hopes of avoiding bankruptcy.

Dan Walters is one of the most decorated and widely syndicated columnists in California history, authoring a column four times a week that offers his view and analysis of the state's political, economic, social and demographic trends. ★

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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.

July 7

6:44 p.m., RMA Violation: Wrong-way driver on Murieta South Parkway. Driver refused to comply with patrol. Loud yelling while using profanity towards RMCS and RMA resident. Citations issued.

July 8

2:30 p.m., Murieta North: patrol observed a motorcycle follow a

resident in a middle resident lane and into the community. Patrol followed to address on Brisa Lane. Rider said he arrived for a job. Resident verified rider as authorized by resident to enter community. Resident advised of no motorcycle access to Murieta North; resident was not aware of regulations. At 5 p.m., resident requested motorcycle escort outbound.

July 9

Reporting party stated two subjects on E-bikes unloaded at Bel Air and entered the North community. Patrol checked from Bel Air to Murieta Parkway and back lakes. Areas checked clear; no subjects found matching

the description given.

July 11

2:30 a.m., security officer observed smoke in the distance toward the west. Upon arrival, officer discovered a barn on fire and no emergency response on scene. Dispatch relayed that Station 59 was aware of fire and on its way. The location was off Jackson Highway approximately a quarter mile west of North Gate. The fire department arrived and contained fire.

7:44 a.m., Officer made contact with a subject that reporting party stated appeared to be a transient woman on Verona Drive digging through trash cans. Subject was wearing a gray-colored flannel with black socks. Subject stated

she got in an argument last night with her friend and left.

She stated she came from Valley Springs and wanted to know where the nearest store is. Subject was advised how to exit the community and advised it is a private community. Subject then started walking south on South Parkway, stopping at Agradar Drive where she became argumentative asking for a ride. Subject then began again walking south, finally exiting the community. Sheriff was notified.

11:35 p.m., Lake Clementia near dock: On arrival to lock up restroom, three vehicles observed departing area. The golf cart was by the dock with three subjects fishing.

Group was seen fishing earlier at Gazebo Park and asked to leave. Group in golf cart departed after patrol informed them that Lake Clementia is also closed.

July 13

Chevy Suburban with trailer parked in entrance to Lake Calero approximately 15 days. Citation issued.

10:43 p.m., Reporting party stated vehicles speeding and doing donuts on the corner of De La Cruz and Murieta Parkway. Patrol checked; vehicles were gone on arrival.

July 16

6:55 p.m., report of a go-kart driving recklessly on Carreta Lane, spinning

donuts and doing burnouts. Upon arrival observed a go-kart spinning donuts on Carreta near 3 Park.

Using patrol vehicle-equipped public address system, patrol requested driver to park the go-kart; driver complied immediately. Driver of go-kart was verbally identified as a resident of Puerto Drive. Patrol requested to load go-kart back on truck; complied without incident. Advised of rules and regulations of vehicles use on public streets.

July 17

11:50 p.m., Boat found with three male subjects on Lake Clementia. Subjects loaded boat and departed area at 23:55 p.m. ★

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MEALS ON WHEELS SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Cripple Creek Draws Sell-out Crowd

Continued from page 1

using the tools they were learning," she said. "It was so fun."

Concert

The Cripple Creek Band first appeared at an ETC concert in 2016, sharing the stage with a Taylor Swift tribute band. Since then, they've performed at various local events, including shows at Rancho Murieta Community Church, private parties, the Gold Rush Classic golf tournament and fundraisers for the Murieta Bulldogs traveling baseball team.

The band also performed for ETC last year, with tickets selling out in record time. Despite the record-breaking heat in 2024, nearly everyone who purchased a ticket showed up.

This year, the weather was far more comfortable, to the extent that several attendees came prepared with sweaters or blankets.

The band's playlist showcased the influence of country and Southern rock artists like Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Eagles, Zac Brown and John McLellan. Even Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze" was reimagined with a country twist.

The packed dance floor erupted in song when the band launched into its catchy version of "Wagon Wheel" by Darius Rucker. At the crowd's insistence — complete with pounding on the stage — the band returned for two encores: "Revival" by Zach Bryan



Murieta Dance Company students perform "The Dance," a lyrical piece they choreographed themselves.



Drummer Travis Simas is performing to a hometown crowd, having lived in Rancho Murieta for 10 years before moving to Sloughhouse last year.

and the classic "Free Bird" by Lynyrd Skynyrd.

Unlike last year, the band performed only two original songs: a decision that band manager Steve Mendiola jokingly attributed to drummer Travis Simas.

"We let Travis pick the songs because it was kind of his hometown show," he said.

Simas, who lived in Rancho Murieta for 10 years before moving to Sloughhouse last year, said

after the show, "I love it here. I love the energy."

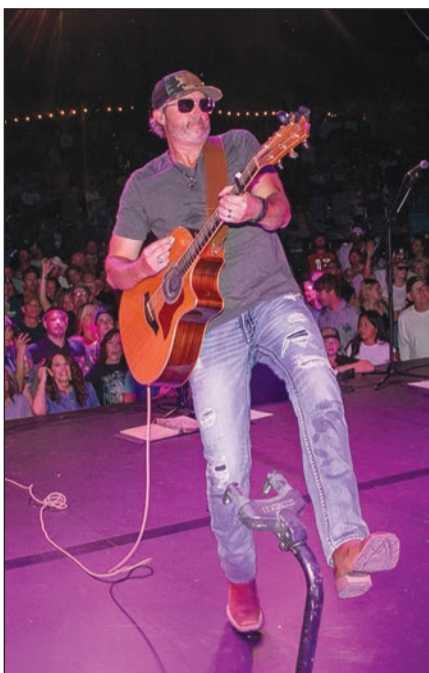
"Rancho Murieta is about as rowdy as it gets," added lead guitarist Stephen Kidd. "We love playing here."

Turner had the last word about the band's performance.

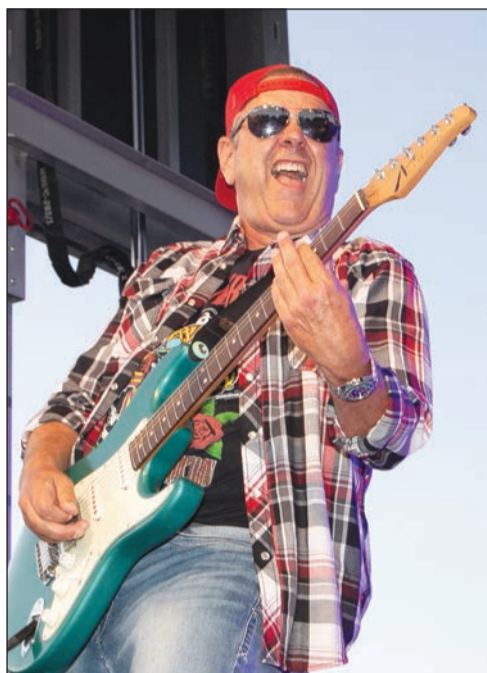
"They had the crowd on their feet from start to finish," he said. "Their blend of country rock and high-energy stage presence created the perfect summer concert vibe." ★



Youngsters scramble for a sponsor T-shirt tossed by Diego Madrigal. He was assisting emcee JT Turner, who launched others with a T-shirt cannon.



Lead singer Neal Morgan leaps into action on the stage.



Musician Stephen Kidd wails on his guitar.



The dance floor is packed after several songs.

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