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# RIVER VALLEY TIMES

41ST YEAR • ISSUE 19

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## Requirement to Build Water Tank Extortion, Developer Says

By Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)**

- A previously undisclosed letter imposing a new condition on the owners of the Residences subdivision was described as "extortion" at two Rancho Murieta Community Services District meetings on Oct. 2 and 3.

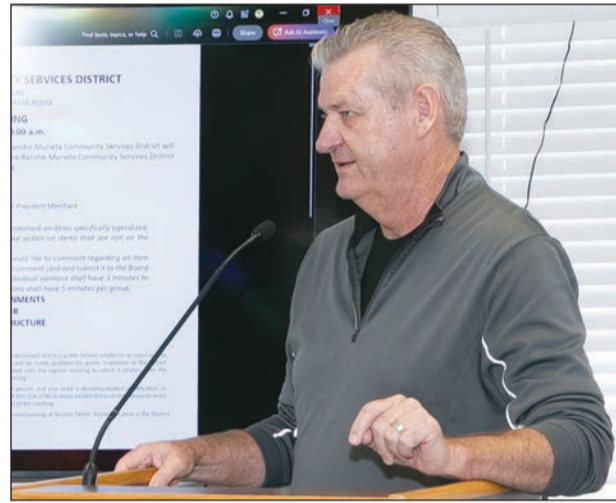
The Sept. 16 letter from District Counsel Patrick Enright states that the district will not issue water

meters for the lots unless River Canyon Properties agrees to a framework for constructing a third water tank. Construction has already begun on the first phase of the 198-lot subdivision, following the district's issuance of will-serve letters in 2024.

Speaking at the Oct. 2 Improvements Committee meeting, developer Bob Keil said the new condition would bankrupt him.

"Having Mr. Merchant (Board President John Merchant) withhold my

*Continued on page 5*



Developer Bob Keil testifies that a new condition requiring him to pay for a new water tank would bankrupt him and amount to extortion.



A Terrata Homes model is under construction just inside the Residences subdivision near Escuela Drive. The builder, LGI Homes, spent weeks trying to obtain water meters from the district. Photos by Gail Bullen

## Hannon Begins Role as Elementary Principal



Ashley Hannon is the new principal at Cosumnes River Elementary School, following four years as vice-principal at Sunrise Elementary, a school with three times the student enrollment of Cosumnes River.

Story and photos by Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)**

- Ashley Hannon's journey to becoming the new principal at Cosumnes River Elementary School is a testament to the power of following one's passions and embracing new opportunities.

She grew up in Georgia

from the age of 5, a proud "Bulldog" who graduated from the University of Georgia in 2005 with a degree in business. After college, she spent about seven years in corporate marketing. Seeing her work appear on billboards and websites was exciting, but the instability of the field prompted her to rethink her career.

"There's, like, a lot of layoffs in marketing when

you lose clients. And I kind of always had a passion for education," she recalled.

A turning point came when Hannon's husband, Craig, entered the military and attended flight school in Alabama. During their two years there, she took the opportunity to return to school and earned a master's degree in education from Troy University.

After relocating to Sacramento in 2013,

she completed her student teaching at Raymond Case Elementary in the Elk Grove Unified School District.

In 2014, Hannon began her teaching career at Arlene Hein Elementary, where she taught fourth grade for five years before moving to first grade. Teaching during COVID proved especially challenging.

*Continued on page 4*

## VFW Honors Bloshenko as Metro's First Firefighter of the Year



Dmitriy Bloshenko, a Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District firefighter/paramedic, has been with Metro Fire since 2017.

Story and photos by Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)**

- In its inaugural presentation of an award, the Rancho Murieta Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars honored Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District firefighter/paramedic Dmitriy Bloshenko as Firefighter of the Year for Rancho Murieta and Sloughouse during a Sept. 22 ceremony at Station 59.

Recognized for his dedication, skill and service to the community, Bloshenko recently transferred with his crew to Station 58 in Sloughouse after three years at the Rancho Murieta station.

Metro Fire members and the local VFW post gathered to celebrate the close partnership between first responders and veterans, joined by 17 members of Bloshenko's family, including his wife, Inna.

Metro Fire Captain Mike Schanzenbach and VFW Senior Vice Commander Bill McCarver designed the one-of-a-kind plaque, which features a description of the award, the name of the first recipient, the VFW logo and a firefighter's helmet with flames in the front merging into an American flag in the back.

Schanzenbach, Bloshenko's supervisor, opened the ceremony. He said when McCarver approached him about a year ago with the idea for a firefighter award, he was humbled, thinking the veterans should be the ones receiving recognition.

"You guys are our heroes, serving our country, and what you have done," he told the VFW attendees. "But we are appreciative, and we love the community involvement."

After introducing himself and other post members, McCarver explained that the VFW's mission is to support and help veterans. He added that the organization also strives to serve the local

*Continued on page 7*

# Find Summerfest Coverage Online

# Pickleball Team Cleans Up



The carnival sparkles in the background as sponsors and their guests line up for a delicious dinner at the Summerfest Gala on Oct. 2. Because of time constraints, the River Valley Times won't provide printed coverage of this year's Summerfest until the Oct. 24 issue. However, the story and many photos are available now at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. Photo by Gail Bullen

By Chase Allen

**ROSEVILLE, CA (MPG)** - The Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club made a very strong showing at the Johnson Ranch Pickleball courts Sept. 26 to 28, and the club posted several medal winners.

On Friday Sept. 26, in the Men's 3.5-3.99 Singles matches, Stuart Allen won the 3.5-3.99 Gold in the under 45-year-old division, and John Martin won Silver in the 60+ Men's 3.0-3.49 division.

On Saturday Sept. 27, in the Men's Doubles 60-plus division of 3.0-3.49 skill level, John Martin and Warren Hughes won the Gold for Rancho Murieta.

On Sunday Sept. 28, the last day of the Sacramento Classic, Jeff and Sue Kohlhardt won the 60-plus Mixed Doubles 3.0 division to represent Rancho Murieta.

The Sacramento Classic Pickleball Tournament is part of a National Pickleball event tour. According to Samantha Martinez, the Johnson Ranch Sports Club Pickleball director, Johnson Ranch Sports club hosts the annual event. It had 444 entries for this tournament, which was the



John Martin and Warren Hughes are Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club Gold Medal Winners in the Men's Doubles Championship.

highest participation level on the entire tour this year.

Pickleball is widely considered the fastest growing sport in the U.S. and is speculated to be an Olympic sport in the future. ★

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# Wildfire Fuel Reduction Project Resumes

Story and photo by Gail Bullen River Valley Times Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - With only a few months remaining before the CAL FIRE grant expires, the final phase of a wildfire fuel reduction project to protect Rancho Murieta resumed Sept. 29.

Registered forester Phyllis Banducci, who is supervising the on-the-ground work, provided the update during the Rancho Murieta Fire Safe Council's online meeting Sept. 22.

Although most of the 927-acre project was finished in February, two contractors will begin the final phase: 157 acres on the Pilliken Ranch, located on the west side of Scott Road just north of Latrobe Road. Follow-up work to treat oak tree stumps that have sprouted will also be carried out.

"You guys might be asking, 'What are you doing starting so early? It hasn't rained and it is really dry,'" Banducci told the Fire Safe Council.

The two contracting firms will begin by using only saws to prune and thin trees, creating piles. Masticators won't be brought in until after it rains or temperatures cool and the fuel moisture content increases.

Banducci said that she "feels very good" about the contractors meeting all state requirements for fire suppression tools and noted they will check their job sites at the end of each day.

"My concern is that if we don't start now, we won't finish," Banducci said.



Registered forester Phyllis Banducci inspects completed work at a fuel reduction unit next to Greens Park on Jan. 21. She is supervising wildfire protection efforts on 927 acres around Rancho Murieta, funded by a \$4.4-million CAL FIRE grant.

"I'm really excited about getting it going, although it is a bit of a risk."

That's because the CAL FIRE grant providing \$4.4 million for the project has a hard end date of March 31.

"We have 157 acres left (on the Pilliken Ranch) that require the heaviest treatment," Banducci said. "If we are lucky, they are going to complete two acres a day... So we have four months to finish before Feb. 1."

While the work could technically be extended into February, that would require paying for a bird-nesting survey.

"I want to save every penny we can go on the ground," Banducci said. "I don't want to waste any more money on bird surveys."

Banducci said the work will also include treating tree stumps on 360 acres where oaks were cut last fall. Workers will apply

herbicide to stumps that are resprouting. The treatment areas will be inside Rancho Murieta, Scott Ranch, and Deer Creek Hills.

"This follow-up treatment is critical to prevent regrowth of ladder fuels," she explained.

During the herbicide application, trails and other public areas will be closed for two to three days, with notices posted two weeks in advance. "I don't want to get the notices out too early because I want people to use the trails as long as they can," she said.

Banducci said she asked Virginia Thorley, Sacramento County Regional Parks grant administrator, about the chances of getting an extension from CAL FIRE.

"She said that CAL FIRE made it absolutely clear that everything needs to be done by March 31 and that includes invoicing," Banducci said. "March is going to be very

busy for all of us."

Fire Safe Council President Greg Pryor asked about tree planting at Deer Creek Hills Preserve.

"As far as I know, they have planted 100 trees and have got the water system in," Banducci said. "But they were going back and putting in cages because there is a real issue with gophers or moles, whatever it was that was eating the trees."

Pryor thanked Banducci for her report.

"You've done great and you put a lot into the community, which is wonderful," Pryor said.

## Background

A \$4.4-million CAL FIRE grant is funding the 927-acre Cosumnes Ladder Fuel Reduction Project. The Fire Safe Council applied for the grant in 2022, and Cal Fire awarded it to Sacramento Regional Parks, which is overseeing project administration.

The grant's primary goal is to reduce ladder fuels by pruning lower tree branches, thinning smaller trees, and removing ground fuels.

"The objective is to manage the oak stand so that, if a fire enters the area, it remains a ground fire," Banducci explained in an interview last January. "Crown fires generate significantly more embers, which can travel into our community and create serious risks."

A crown fire is a wildfire that spreads rapidly through the canopy, or tops, of trees.

A total of approximately 937 acres were designated for fuel reduction. Of this, 363 acres (40%) were inside the gates, while 322 acres (33%) were on ranch lands west of Scott Road. Additionally, 252 acres (27%) of oak stands in Deer Creek Hills, east of Scott Road and along Latrobe Road, were part of

the project.

After surveying all the properties on foot in 2022 and 2023, Banducci divided them into 21 units ranging in size from three to 129 acres.

She developed a specific treatment prescription for each unit to guide the contractors' work and conducted daily site inspections to ensure the plans were followed. Her goal was to tailor each approach to the site's specific conditions, striking a balance between effective fuel reduction and environmental preservation.

Banducci also said in January that the project would not have been possible without the Fire Safe Council. The council persistently applied for multiple grants and, to their amazement, ultimately secured the \$4.4 million CAL FIRE grant in 2022.

Banducci noted that Rob Schultz, who wrote the grant application, and council members Greg Pryor, Cheryl McElhaney and Kelly Hopkins all played key roles in securing the funding.

Hopkins also serves as executive director of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy, which manages Deer Creek Hills.

Assistance from former Sacramento County Supervisor Sue Frost was also crucial to the project. Because the Fire Safe Council was not a non-profit, it needed a sponsor to apply for the CAL FIRE grant. Frost facilitated the involvement of Sacramento County Regional Parks, where staff member Veronica Thorley now serves as the project's administrative manager.

This story is online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

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# Hannon Begins Role as Elementary Principal

Craig, a full-time Army National Guard pilot.

“Absolutely amazing... my biggest cheerleader,” she said. “He’s been on kid duty, a lot of pickups, and taking the practices as I kind of, like, get my feet wet.”

Hannon said she makes it a priority to spend meaningful moments with her family.

“I try to spend quality time with my kids instead of quantity,” she explained.

One of their traditions is what she calls “forced walks.”

“They are not a choice. You have to go, and second, you have to walk. You can’t ride a bike, you can’t ride a scooter, you can’t bring a ball. It’s just us, the four of us, walking and talking... and we’re not bringing a cell phone or a radio or anything like that.”

Additionally, Hannon is committed to her own well-being.

“I have a Peloton. I like to run, and I’ll get on the bike, too,” she said. “It’s just kind of, that’s like my me time, right?”

She also enjoys listening to audiobooks and watching true crime stories.

As the new principal, Hannon exemplifies how it’s possible to balance school leadership and motherhood, finding connections, joy and growth in both worlds.

*This story is online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook.* ★

Continued from page 1

“I taught first grade on Zoom. It was kind of crazy... but my kids were... pretty resilient,” she said.

Following the pandemic, she continued teaching first grade at John Reith Elementary.

After Hannon and her husband began building a home near Grant Line Road and Douglas, she took an interest in Sunrise Elementary. When the vice principal position opened, she was eager at the thought of working so close to home.

“What are the odds that I could get that job and be that close to home? And then I did,” she said.

Sunrise is a bustling, year-round school with approximately 1,300 students: more akin to a small city than a neighborhood school. Hannon credits her principal and mentor there with preparing her for leadership, helping her gain confidence and develop the skills she would need to “spread her wings” one day.

Being part of the neighborhood where her own children attended brought both rewards and challenges.

“It’s so fun. Because, like, I got to know all of my kids’ friends... But then it’s like, you know,



Along with greeting all the students and parents on the first day of school on Aug. 14, Hannon stands ready to direct traffic.

I’m at the grocery store, and it’s like, ‘Hi, Miss Hannon’... So yeah, it was really great. But I’m also glad to have, like, a little bit of separation now.

“And my daughter said the same thing. She was glad that this year she would get to be a regular kid.”

Several factors prompted Hannon to apply for the Cosumnes River opening after veteran educator Mike Blomquist retired. She was drawn to the

school’s smaller size, traditional calendar, strong academic reputation, experienced staff and its proximity to her home.

As the new principal, Hannon is eager to embrace the small-school community.

“I just want to meet everybody: There are only 364 kids. I’m determined to learn so many names, meet families,” she said.

She’s also looking forward to Cosumnes River traditions, like the harvest

festival, and is already tackling practical challenges, such as parking lot congestion.

Hannon also hopes to get the school’s broadcasting program up and running.

“It’s definitely something that I would like to do. The kids like it; it gives them a chance to be exposed to a lot of different things: writing scripts, doing interviews, using a microphone and presenting in front of people.”

Hannon said the energy

she gives to students is returned in kind.

“As crazy as the job is... I love being with the kids every day: favorite part of the day... honestly, it helps me be a better parent sometimes, because I can, like, take that step back and, ‘OK, breathe,’” she said.

When asked how she balances work with motherhood – her daughter Olivia is 9 and her son Jackson is 5 – Hannon credited her husband,



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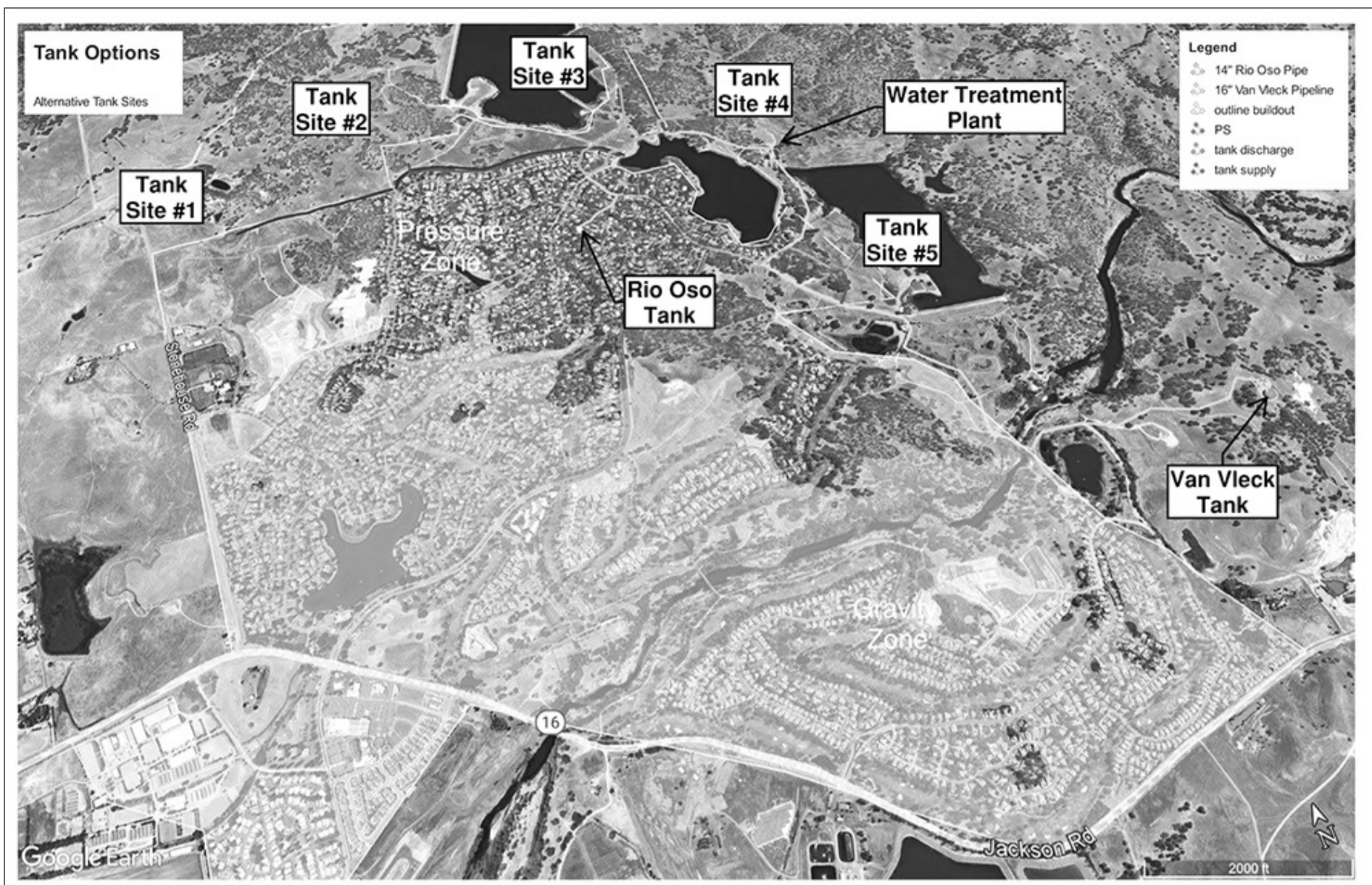
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# Requirement to Build Water Tank Extortion, Developer Says



The graphic shows five proposed sites for a third water tank. The Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee discussed the topic on Oct. 2. Courtesy photo

Continued from page 1

meters and my improvement plans for a month until I sign for 100% of a new tank is nothing short of extortion," Keil said.

Merchant, who co-chairs the committee, did not respond to Keil's contention because he was absent from that meeting. However, at a special board meeting the following day, Oct. 3, Merchant said, "That was not a letter I asked Mr. Enright to write."

However, Merchant explained what had prompted the letter.

"I think what generated the response is that you showed up here and told Amelia (Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder) if you didn't have meters in 24 hours, you were going to sue us," Merchant said.

At both meetings, it became clear that the new requirement had been imposed without prior discussion or action by the full board, a process that could violate California's open-meetings law.

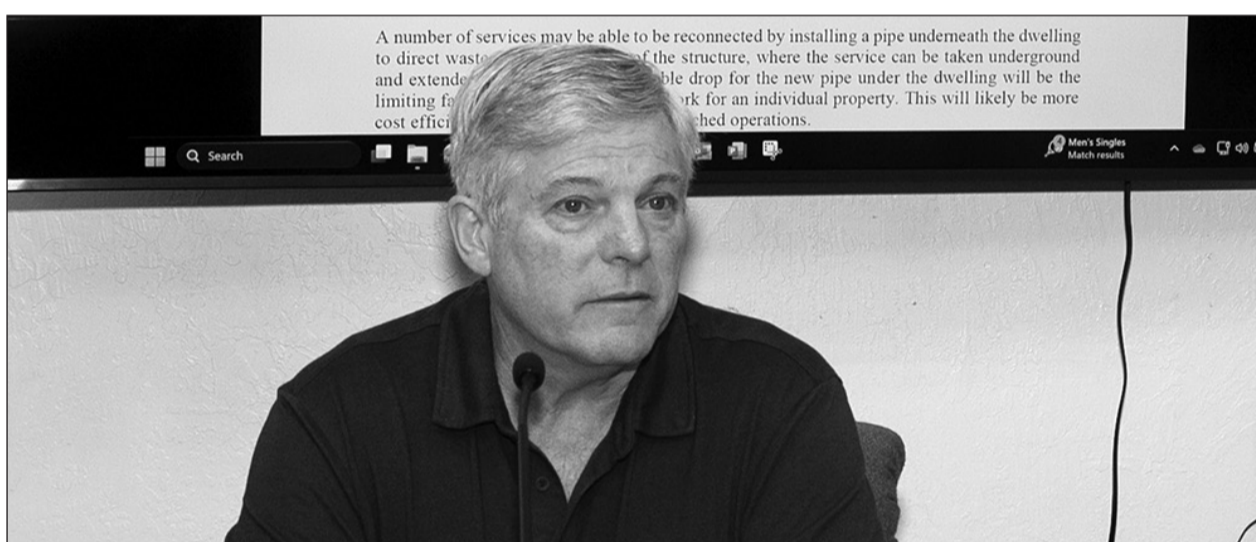
The River Valley Times was unable to seek comment from Enright, who was out of town until Oct. 7.

The paper also did not follow up with LGI Homes representative Jonathan Liesch, who addressed the board at its meeting on Sept. 17. Liesch had asked for the board's help after district staff refused to accept fee payments so he could obtain water meters for model homes under construction and declined to inspect open trenches that posed a safety hazard. Merchant and Wilder confirmed after the meeting that the district inspected the trenches the following day and accepted payment for seven water connection fees on Oct. 2.

## Improvements Meeting

A major topic at the Oct. 2 Improvements Committee meeting was a presentation by Joe Domenichelli, the district's contract engineer. He outlined five potential locations for constructing a third water tank and presented cost estimates ranging from \$7.8 million to \$9.8 million. However, his comments made it clear that construction would be a long way off due to the project's complexity.

The engineer first recommended building a third



Engineer Joe Domenichelli proposes five possible sites for a third water tank. Photo by Gail Bullen

tank in 2024 after investigating why water levels in the Rio Oso tank had dropped so sharply during hot weather in July. When Domenichelli presented his formal report last spring, he again emphasized the need for a third tank and proposed an interim solution to address the issue until construction could occur.

The board approved that interim measure – installation of a throttling control valve at the water treatment plant – to help equalize water levels between the two existing tanks. The improvement is expected to alleviate over-drafting at the Rio Oso tank and provide sufficient capacity to serve the first phase of the Residences subdivision. To date, however, the only formal board action related to a third tank has been to authorize Domenichelli to prepare related reports.

After the engineer finished his presentation about five possible well sites on Oct. 2, Keil jumped up to comment.

"I have received a letter from Mr. Merchant, drafted by Mr. Enright, that in order for him to release water meters to my projects where houses are underway, I would need to pay the entire cost for a water tank at about \$9 million," he said, adding that the demand "would bankrupt him and was nothing short of extortion."

Merchant couldn't respond because he did not attend the Improvements Committee meeting. Director Randy Jenco, who serves on the committee with Merchant, said he didn't know anything about the Sept. 16 letter sent to Keil's attorney.

"I don't know if other board members are in the loop on that, but I have not been," Jenco said.

Keil also spoke at

length about related topics, including how he had met all the requirements outlined in the will-serve letters, offered to donate land for a tank site, and implemented water conservation measures in the Residences that would reduce demand on the Rio Oso tank.

He argued that the district could adopt a similar staggered watering schedule in the upper zone currently served by Rio Oso, saying that even with just 30% participation, it could potentially delay or even eliminate the need for a third tank.

## Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

The board held a special meeting on Oct. 3 to appoint a new Ad Hoc Committee to replace one that has been providing direction to staff since January in the absence of a general manager. Former Board President Steve Booth and current President John Merchant initially served on the committee, but after Booth stepped down, Merchant continued alone. Merchant noted that Director Bill Gere began assisting him after his recent appointment to the board.

The board agreed that two of the new committees' primary responsibilities would be to answer staff questions and initiate the process to hire a new general manager. Directors plan to bring additional suggestions for the committee's duties to the Oct. 15 board meeting. The board also agreed that Merchant and Gere would serve as the committee members.

Keil raised numerous concerns during the public comment period. He began by reviewing the original purpose of the Ad Hoc Committee, which

Booth had formed at the Dec. 6 board organizational meeting. Its intent, he said, was to serve as a liaison between the board and staff on six issues, four related to water, one addressing overdue audits and another concerning security alignment.

"However, none of those things granted Mr. Merchant the ability to unilaterally impose conditions on approved projects requiring me to build a \$9 million tank at my expense or I don't get any of my meters," Keil said. "None of those granted Mr. Merchant the ability to instruct staff to break district policy on will-serves by instructing staff not to do inspections, not to issue invoices for meters, not to issue meters... and instructing the district engineer to add language to improvement plans restricting the issuance of meters."

Keil added that the process had not been transparent.

"It is my recommendation that you don't pass it today until you have specific guidelines. Two, that you look at the composition of the ad hoc committee and at least add somebody else to watch them, either from the public or somebody else from the board," he said. "This ad hoc committee has let him run amok, and I need it to stop."

Keil also pointed out that the Sept. 16 letter Enright sent to his attorney outlining the new condition for a third water tank had been copied only to him and to Wilder.

Merchant responded, "That was not a letter I asked Mr. Enright to write."

"So, Mr. Enright did it on his own without board direction?" Keil asked.

Director Tim Maybee

intervened. Saying he hadn't seen the letter, Maybee asked Keil to send information about his concerns to the board and attempted to steer the discussion back to the agenda item.

But Keil persisted, arguing that it was a mistake to allow the Ad Hoc Committee to continue operating without clear direction until the details were finalized at the next meeting. He also noted that the board packet didn't contain any supporting materials about the formation of a new committee, such as a resolution.

Wilder responded that a resolution was not required for an Ad Hoc Committee because the board president has the authority to form one.

"The Ad Hoc Committee doesn't have the authority to make decisions, only a quorum of the board," she said.

When Keil asked Wilder whether the district's attorney had the authority to act without board direction, she told him no.

## Letter

"Have you seen the letter?" Keil then asked the board.

Merchant replied that he had.

"The attorney's job is to evaluate what is happening and to tell us if what we are proposing to do is within the limits of the law," he said.

Keil asked for a show of hands from board members who had not seen the letter but Merchant spoke over him.

Wilder then announced she would read the letter aloud.

"Because I do have a public request for this, it is going to be on Nextdoor tomorrow," she explained.

The letter began by stating that the district

engineer would approve the completed Phase II infrastructure improvement plans, as Keil's attorney had demanded in a Sept. 10 letter.

However, the letter went on to state that the district and River Canyon Properties needed to address storage capacity in the Van Vleck and Rio Oso tanks. It outlined four requirements for establishing a framework to do so, including one stating that the cost would be apportioned among the district, River Canyon Properties, and any future developments that would benefit from the new tank, effectively meaning Keil wouldn't be required to pay the entire cost.

"With the construction of the first homes not being completed until early 2026, this gives the parties 90 days to agree on a new framework for a new water tank to service the Residences lots," the letter concluded.

Gere suggested that the board hold a special "Bob meeting" in a month to consider Keil's concerns. But Keil said he needed a meeting the following Monday because he couldn't wait.

"I've got contracts. I've got builders. I've got responsibilities," he said. "John's whole thing is just to bankrupt me by pushing this thing down the road until everything fails."

Although Gere tried to steer the discussion back to the agenda item, Merchant and Keil continued to argue.

Merchant pointed out that Enright had written the letter to Keil's attorney, not to him.

"This is good information to have," Keil responded. "Without board authorization, your attorney responded to my attorney's request by conditioning my project."

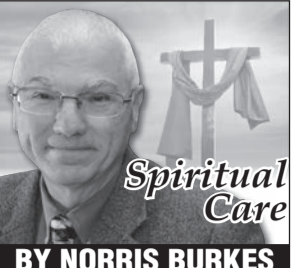
Merchant said the letter had originated after Keil showed up at the district office and told Wilder, "If you didn't have meters in 24 hours, you were going to sue us. Don't say that you didn't do that."

Keil replied, "You have opened a can of worms here."

The board then returned to discussion of the agenda item, the formation of a new Ad Hoc Committee.

This story is online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

# Thank You for Walking With Me



BY NORRIS BURKLES

“Happy Birthday,” my wife sweetly whispered as we woke.

“How does it feel?” Becky asked.

“What? Being 68?”

“No. How does it feel to be footloose and deadline free. Your newspapers just published your last column today.”

“Feels like I just lost a lot of friends.”

“Maybe not. Aren’t you going to stay in touch with readers through weekly email?”

“I hope so,” I said.

“Plus, some readers will be joining you on the Chispa volunteer trips next year.”

She’s right.

I’ve always felt that you, my readers, walked along side me. Even though anyone in earshot would think I was talking to myself, I was often talking to you.

We began our conversations in 2002 as I left active-duty Air Force and restarted my hospital chaplain career.

From that beginning, I feel we have been walking the hospital halls together. Those years were not easy ones for me, but I felt encouraged just knowing that you were listening. You responded with kindness and understanding as I recounted my ministry with pediatric cancer patients, premature babies, parents who lost children,

and children who lost parents.

On other days, we found a moment to laugh together, chuckling over the military hat I lost in the toilet, over my unintentional theft of toilet paper, and my OCD that had me noting expired license plate stickers.

And even though I employed the help of a freelance editor, you still corrected my spelling, my grammar, and my punctuation. You fact-checked my references to movies, songs, books, and ouch, even Bible verses.

You prayed for me as I made death notifications for Iraq war KIAs. I felt like you followed me to Iraq as you sent hundreds of care packages to the service members serving with me at Joint Base Balad.

You were there for my biggest losses — my mother-in-law to a stroke in 2011, my brother, Milton, to COVID in 2020, my best friend, Roger, in 2020 to cancer and my mother last year from natural causes.

Still, through all that trauma, we managed to share a lot of fun the last 23 years as you read my column in over 50 papers — Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and even Ontario Canada.

Readers in those states invited me to speak in their churches, schools, clubs and veteran events. They read my books, bought them, donated them to troops, and one

Florida church even commissioned me to write one.

Along the way, I snagged a few awards from the Amy Foundation, the National Society of Newspaper Columnists and the Religion Newswriters Association, BUT, I’m forever most proud of the award you gave me.

I say, “You” because it was solely your response to Chispa Project that sent me to New York in 2019 to receive the Will Rogers Humanitarian Award “... for positively affecting readers’ lives and producing tangible humanitarian benefits.”

Now this last column is your recognition for positively influencing my life!

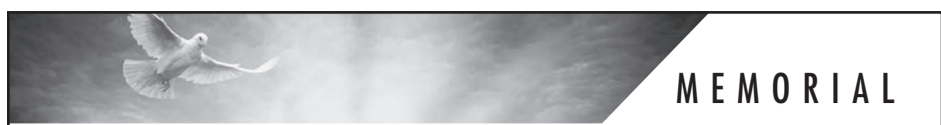
But alas, I won’t stop writing entirely. I’ll still appear weekly in the two newspapers closest to my home, The Union in Grass Valley, Calif., and the Auburn Journal of Auburn, Calif. Of course, I’ll share these columns with everyone who signs up for my email list.

So, don’t lose touch.

Get my weekly muse by sending an email to [comment@thechaplain.net](mailto:comment@thechaplain.net). Or sign yourself up at [www.thechaplain.net/newsletter](http://www.thechaplain.net/newsletter). Remember to spell chaplain correctly, not chaplin. We’ve talked about this.

Finally, please continue to support Chispa Project either by donating or volunteering for a trip in 2026 as they get ready for the next Honduran school year. Find info at [chispa-project.org](http://chispa-project.org).

All of my books can still be ordered on Amazon. Autographed copies can be obtained on my website [www.thechaplain.net](http://www.thechaplain.net) ★



## MEMORIAL

### CAROLYN JANE VALLADAO • 04/07/1936 - 09/19/2025

Carolyn Jane Valladao, a Rancho Murieta resident, passed away peacefully on September 19, 2025 at the age of 89. Carol, a devoted wife, mother and grandmother, was known for her love of entertaining and her beautiful skills as a pianist.

Born in Sioux City, Iowa on April 7, 1936, she grew up in a close-knit family with her parents Evertt and Naomi Staudt and her beloved sister Rosemary. She began piano lessons as a small child where she discovered a lifelong love of music. She attended Heelan High School where she was an honor student participating in Operetta, Glee Club and Dance. Her family was active in the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church where Carol served as pianist and organist.



She attended Denver University where she met the love of her life, Richard Valladao. They married and started a life together that would last almost 70 years. They initially lived in the Bay Area where they had three sons, Michael, Greg and John. A business opportunity soon took them to Louisiana, where they would end up raising their boys. While Carol was initially hesitant about the move to the South, she soon came to appreciate the Southern warmth and hospitality, and she made friends she would keep for a lifetime. She was active in the kids’ schools and sports while also being the pianist for the local Little Theater group. Neighborhood friends and family would often be gathered around her piano belting out popular show tunes and Christmas carols.

They moved back to California in 1981 purchasing a Rancho Murieta golf course lot off Guadalupe Drive and built a house designed for entertaining. She became immersed in the Rancho Murieta community participating in many Country Club activities including The Niners Ladies Golf Group and volunteering at the Raley’s Senior Gold Rush during the mid-1990s. Her skills

as a pianist/accompanist were used at the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church where she played at countless masses and funerals. She and Richard continued their tradition of hosting events and dinner parties, the highlight of which would be everyone gathering around the piano at the end of the evening.

Richard and Carol were world travelers, taking trips and cruises over their 67-year marriage to faraway places including South America, Europe, Russia, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand. Carol (Miss Carol to her grandkids) ensured her grandchildren would also inherit her love of travel by taking each of them on a cruise when they turned 11.

Carol is survived by her three sons, Michael Valladao (Sue) of San Jose, CA, Greg Valladao (Kathy) of Phoenix, AZ and John Valladao, (Kristy) of Lakewood, CA, seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. While she is no longer with us, she will be remembered with love by many for years to come.

There will be a Rosary (10:30) and Funeral Mass (11:00) on October 7, 2025, at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Rancho Murieta.

## COMMUNITY BRIEFS

**Blood Drive Slated Oct. 27**

Vitalant will hold its next Rancho Murieta Community Blood Drive from noon to 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 27 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 14673 Cantova Way.

The event is sponsored by the Rancho Murieta Women’s Club and the Knights of Columbus. Appointments can be made online at [donors.vitalant.org](http://donors.vitalant.org) using blood drive code SMFM053 or by calling Vitalant at 877-258-4825. Walk-ins will be accepted as space permits.

Donors will receive a 10% off coupon for El Gallo Mexican Restaurant and be entered into a drawing for a \$50 El Gallo gift card, donated by Carole Thames of Town and

Country Real Estate.

Vitalant also will hold a separate drawing for a \$10,000 gift card.

Eat well and drink plenty of water before donating, and bring a photo ID. For eligibility questions, call 877-258-4825 or visit [vitalant.org](http://vitalant.org).

One donation can save more than one life — there’s no substitute for volunteer blood donors.

**Scouts Selling Pumpkins at Fire Station**

Scout Troop 633 will hold its annual pumpkin sale Oct. 11-12 and Oct. 18-19 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in front of the Rancho Murieta fire station.

Proceeds will help reduce the cost of summer camp, support service

projects and assist with troop expenses.

Community members are encouraged to stop by and support the Scouts — donations are gladly accepted.

**Growing Edible Plants is Garden Club Topic**

Lorina Cajias, owner of Lorina Edible Gardens, will be the speaker when the River Valley Garden Club meets Oct. 28 at the RMA Building.

The doors open at 6 p.m. with refreshments and a raffle. The program begins at 7 p.m. The first meeting is free to non-members.

Cajias will discuss her innovative approach to growing vegetables, herbs and spices to then turn them into delicious foods, teas and seasonings. ★

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# Tennis Club and Garden Club Keep It Lively and Beautiful

# School Board Votes Down Girls' Sports Measure



The Easy-Breezy Endless Summer Women's Event held at the Rancho Murieta Tennis Club on Sept. 27 draws many participants. Courtesy photos

By Elizabeth DelToro and Nancy Compton

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - The Easy-Breezy Endless Summer Women's Tennis Event held at the Rancho Murieta Tennis Club on Sept. 27 was a remarkable success, thanks to the River Valley Garden Club, the sponsors and the many donors.

The garden club enhanced the surroundings by planting vibrant flowers and arranging the planters to create a more inviting atmosphere. Deb Rooney and her Community Project team from the garden club generously offered their time and expertise to prepare the new plantings before the tennis tournament.

A total of 24 ladies from the Rancho Murieta Tennis Club, as well as neighboring sports clubs, gathered to compete in three sets, with three teams emerging victorious in their respective flights. The lively music was provided by Davey Boy and the Phenomenal Band, while lunch was expertly catered by the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

The tennis club wishes to express



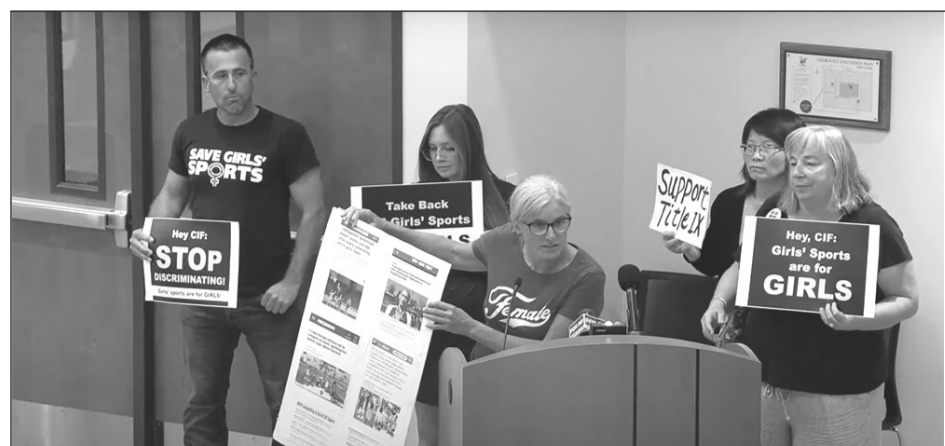
The Community Project Team from the River Valley Garden Club enhances the tournament with new plantings. From left are Deb Rooney, Donna Hansen, Roseann Stevenson and Nancy Compton.

its heartfelt gratitude to their sponsors: Brennan Lexus of Roseville; Karen Hoberg of Rancho Murieta Homes & Land, Inc.; Heidi Powers of Coldwell Banker Realty; Spencer of Iron Hub Winery; and donors: Starbucks, Rancho Murieta Golf and Pro Shop, Rancho Murieta Country Club, Mike Mahoney, John Vigil (Rancho Murieta Tennis Pro), Sharon Pelfry, Ted Schoenfeld, the Local Bean and Yogurt Pop.

This story is also online at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★



New plants flourish in a planter close to the tennis courts.



Many speakers during public comment backed trustee Heidi Moore's proposal, arguing that transgender athletes in girls' sports create unfair advantages. Photo courtesy of Elk Grove Unified School District

By Idaly Valencia MPG Staff

**ELK GROVE, CA (MPG)** - At its Sept. 23 meeting, the Elk Grove Unified School District board heard hours of public comment on a proposed resolution addressing Title IX and girls' sports.

Trustee Heidi Moore introduced the measure, titled "Title IX and Fairness in Girls' Interscholastic Sports," proposing it be placed on a future agenda for discussion. The resolution called on the district to support protections for female athletes under Title IX, which prohibits gender discrimination in education programs, including athletics.

Many speakers during public comment backed Moore's proposal, arguing that transgender athletes in girls' sports create unfair advantages. Supporters, who consisted of parents and community members, thanked Moore for raising the issue and highlighted concerns about safety and opportunities for girls in sports.

"In recent years, there have been troubling incidents that showed clearly what can go wrong when girls are forced to compete directly with boys and their strength, speed, sight or power put them at risk," one parent said.

Speakers also referred to former President Donald Trump's executive orders on transgender athletes and cited biological differences between boys and girls.

"Boys and girls are built differently. This isn't just opinion; it is biology. Boys typically have weight and muscle mass, higher bone density and stronger upper body strength," another speaker said.

Others opposed the resolution, saying it could harm transgender students.

"As a clinician, I see how depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation rise when students are cut off from belonging," said Katie Huston, who stated she was a licensed mental health therapist.

Before the vote, Moore urged her fellow school board members to vote in support of moving forward with this conversation at the next meeting.

"This is about doing what is right for the girls, who do not have a voice. I am their voice today and I hope you will join me," she said.

After the testimony, the board voted 7-1, Moore being the only one in support, against placing the resolution on a future agenda, citing looking to the federal court's decisions with the ongoing national legal battles over the issue.

Afterward, Moore wrote on social media that her resolution was meant "to bring awareness to rights afforded to girls and women under Title IX, to advocate for fairness and safety for female-student athletes, and to call upon governing bodies and individuals in the state of California to protect our female-student athletes."

Moore also noted similar resolutions have passed in 15 other school districts in California.

Although the board declined to move the measure forward, supporters said the discussion raised awareness in the community.

"It's not fair for a female body to compete with a male; otherwise, we would get to do co-ed," said California Family Council President and resident Greg Bert.

Bert told the Elk Grove Citizen that trustees should take a stronger role when residents raise concerns and credited Moore for starting the conversation.

"This is not just isolated to Elk Grove," he said, pointing to lawsuits that have been filed by high school athletes in the state for Title IX violations.

Bert also noted recent boycotts by girls' teams, including Bakersfield Christian High School and Patriot High School in Jurupa Valley, over competing against transgender athletes, as well as a walk-out at a Temecula school where girls said they felt unsafe in locker rooms as instances in which girls are taking a stance against biological males in girls' sports.

"Hopefully this gave the community an opportunity to speak up," Bert said.

For now, Elk Grove Unified School District will wait on federal court decisions before taking further action and the measure will not be considered in upcoming meetings. ★

# VFW Honors Bloshenko as Metro's First Firefighter of the Year

Continued from page 1

community, including support for first responders.

"Sac Metro Fire Stations 58 and 59 are more than fire stations to us," he said. "These heroic firefighters who serve Rancho Murieta and Sloughhouse are also members of our family."

The VFW asked officers to submit a recommendation from each shift at the two stations, and a selection committee chose the recipient.

"If I am ever in need of a paramedic, which I probably will be, this is the firefighter I would want to respond," McCarver said. "His skills are outstanding, and his passion for his fellow man can never be questioned."

Bloshenko, caught by surprise, expressed gratitude and humility.

"I honestly have no idea this is happening," he said. "This community is something special. I've worked at different stations, and this one feels like it's a very tight-knit community: You don't get that at many other stations. I don't deserve this, and I have no idea why. That's all I've got to say."

VFW Post Commander Mick Mineni told Bloshenko the post would submit his packet for a higher-level award.

"Not only will you get our first annual award at the local level, but there is a state-level and national-level award," he said. "We want to recognize you beyond this. What you do matters, and so we appreciate you."

Metro Fire Public Information Officer Captain Mark Nunez offered his congratulations and appreciation: "I'm not surprised by this. I've had the opportunity to work with him off and on over my career, and he is exemplary at his



Dmitriy Bloshenko reacts with surprise after VFW Vice Commander Bill McCarver and Sac Metro Captain Mike Schanzenback unveil the new award. McCarver's dog, Bravo, takes part in the fun.

profession," Nunez said. "We at Metro Fire are very proud of your accomplishments, your time here and what you've done. This right here exemplifies who you are as a member of Metro Fire."

VFW member Dan Pennington also praised Station 59.

"You pay much attention to what's going on around. It's no accident this place is as squared away as it looks today," he said.

As friends, family and colleagues gathered for photographs with fire trucks, VFW members and Metro Fire crews, a shared sense of pride reflected the community's commitment to supporting veterans and first responders alike.

The River Valley Times interviewed Bloshenko after the ceremony.

After joining Metro Fire in 2017, he worked at six different fire stations across the metropolitan area before successfully

bidding for Station 59 in Rancho Murieta in 2022. In the most recent round of station bids, however, Bloshenko and his crew were outbid for Station 59 but had enough seniority to secure Station 58 in Sloughhouse.

Bloshenko said the local station differs from others where he has worked because of the sense of community.

"Everybody is close to each other, and they take care of each other," he said. "They also take care of the first responders."

Firefighters are regularly invited to big community events, and children stop by the station. People are very friendly.

"Whenever they have leftover refreshments from their events, they bring it over to us," he added.

Bloshenko was born in Moldova, and his family moved to the Sacramento area when he was 10. He graduated from



Dmitriy Bloshenko and his wife, Inna, offer a closer look at the plaque.

Florin High School. After taking classes at Cosumnes River College, he enrolled in the California Regional Fire Academy, which was then affiliated with American River College. He earned certificates as a firefighter, emergency medical technician and paramedic.

Bloshenko said he enjoys being a firefighter because it allows him to make a difference.

"You have to act so quickly to be on top of it so the fire doesn't get a lot bigger," he said.

He likes being a paramedic just as much.

"You get to help people when they are having their worst day," he said.

Bloshenko has been married to his wife, Inna, for three years. They don't have children "yet," he said with a smile.

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

# Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



The offseason is over, and your Sacramento Kings are undefeated. It's that time of the year for effervescent optimism, and it has a contagious effect.

Time to be a little kid again and dream that your home team can win the first championship in Sacramento Kings history.

Is that a strong likelihood? The basketball pundits will tell you no, and emphatically no. Local media seems to have a Debbie downer attitude as it relates to the Kings playoff chances, let alone an actual championship.

I choose to focus on what I know is doable and ever likely, with the assembled group of ballers we have that will grace the confines of Golden One Arena on Oct. 8. The Kings face Utah Jazz in their first preseason game of the 2025/2026 campaign.

I will be sitting behind the Kings bench like a kid in a candy store, ready to greet newcomer Dennis Schroder with open arms, and hopes that Dennis will get a warm Sacramento welcome. Schroder has received few accolades as he joins this year's squad, but I believe he could make Sacramento his home for years to come.

As a mentor, Schroder offers a great opportunity for both Nique Clifford and Devin Carter to see how an NBA point guard plays both ends of the court, and Dennis skills as a teacher and veteran NBA ball distributor portends to be an invaluable asset.

Little used Doug McDermott managed to acquire a fan club last season, as he electrified the crowd with his deft 3-point shooting, and it remains to be seen if Doug Christie can translate McDermotts ability to shoot from long range into wins.

Domantas Sabonis returns as the shining star, and his dominance is undeniable. The perennial rebounding champion of the NBA holds down the block like no other center in Sacramento Kings history, and the 2025/2026 season should be more of the same.

Sabonis brings a nightly double-double to the table and an attitude of optimism that translates into team chemistry. If there was a statistic for helping fallen players to their feet, Domantas would win the award going away, and that comes with an effervescent smile that lights up the court.

If ever there is a player that deserves 100% fan support, it is Sacramento's own

Domantas Sabonis, and my advice to fans is to enjoy this magnetic big man while you can.

As Wednesday approaches with no recent acquisitions, the starting five appears to be Domantas Sabonis, Dennis Schroder, DeMar DeRozan, Zach Lavine and Keegan Murray.

That represents a lot of scoring power, what remains to be seen is how Doug Christie can accomplish a flow that will return the Kings to the high-powered scoring machine that led the NBA in scoring just 3 short seasons ago. That cannot be done by the starters alone, so Christie's use of his bench will be a needed ingredient.

Malik Monk appears to be more comfortable in the 6th man role, and he could become a catalyst of prosperity on both ends.

Likewise, Devin Carter showed flashes of brilliance last season, with his defensive skills, and playing alongside Keon Ellis, this tandem could wreak havoc on opposing offensives.

A looming question is whether Doug Christie will abandon his staccato substitution style, in favor of one that allows players to understand better their roles. Knowing that you can expect to play every game and understand how many minutes it's likely you'll play can help in fomenting a more formidable NBA bench.

Will 2025/2026 be a coming out party for Isaac Jones? It should be, as he adds length while helping support Sabonis on the boards, and provides a scoring punch with a nice touch around the rim that can translate into easy baskets.

It is no secret that many teams approached the Kings regarding Keon Ellis and Keegan Murray. I give credit to G.M. Scott Perry for realizing what he has in these talented youngsters and keeping them in this year's squad.

If you're not excited Kings fans, it's time to let your hair down and howl! Get a little crazy and dream the dream!

The first 10 games of the regular season are brutal, and if our hometown boys can acquit themselves admirably, fans may be in for a season to remember!

All the best and enjoy!  
Your thoughts are always welcome at [vgarris@riskingsfan@gmail.com](mailto:vgarris@riskingsfan@gmail.com). ★

# Social Security Matters

## When Will My Disability Become My Regular Social Security?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

**Dear Rusty:** I hope you can answer this question. I'm currently receiving Social Security Disability benefits, and I will be turning 65 in February 2026. I'm confused as to how Social Security Disability transitions to regular Social Security, and when. I assume it's age 65 but maybe it's my retirement date? Also, does the amount remain the same or will it change? I'm not working. I've been on SSDI for about 15 years. Thank you.  
**Signed: Disabled Senior**

**Dear Disabled Senior:** If you are collecting Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, those SSDI benefits

will automatically convert to become your regular Social Security retirement benefit when you reach your SS full retirement age (FRA) which, in your case, is age 67. For information, FRA today is somewhere between age 66 and 67, depending on your year of birth, and the full retirement age for everyone born in 1960 or later is age 67.

The change from SSDI to your regular Social Security benefit will be transparent to you because your monthly benefit amount will remain the same. SSDI benefits were originally awarded to you based upon your full retirement age entitlement when you applied for SSDI (even though you hadn't yet reached your FRA when you went on SSDI). Thus, the monthly benefit amount will not change because it is based on your lifetime earnings record, from before you became disabled.

FYI, although age 65 was once Social Security's "retirement

age," full retirement age for Social Security today is based on the year you were born. So, your SSDI benefit will automatically switch to become your regular Social Security retirement benefit as soon as you reach age 67. Essentially, the only thing that will change is the Social Security Trust Fund from which your benefits will be paid.

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# For Those Hoping to Be California's Next Governor, The Clock is Ticking



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Over the last half-century or so, California has had six elections for governor when the office was being vacated.

Understandably, such incumbent-free elections to run the nation's most populous and economically powerful state have drawn serious candidates, mostly holders of other high-profile offices who declared themselves as soon as decorum would allow.

When, for example, Republican Ronald Reagan's two terms as governor were ending in 1974, the Democratic secretary of state, Jerry Brown, narrowly defeated the Republican state controller, Houston Flournoy.

This bit of political history is offered because the end of Gavin Newsom's governorship is approaching rapidly. In scarcely a year, California voters will choose a new governor. The June 2 primary, which will determine the two finalists, is just eight months away.

Yet the field of would-be governors remains very unsettled.

For months voters, political media and potential campaign financiers waited for former Vice President Kamala Harris to decide whether, after losing the presidency to Donald Trump, she would seek the governorship.

Harris finally said no, with a rather odd remark: "I don't want to go back in the system. I think it's broken." She may have been referring to national politics, but since the issue was California's governorship, she could also have been implying the state was broken after many years of dominance by her Democratic Party.

Harris' decision, whatever her motives, did not settle the question about who will be running for governor next year. There are declared candidates, of course, but none scores very high in preliminary polling.

Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis had been one of the first to declare her candidacy but shortly after Harris announced her decision, Kounalakis dropped out, opting instead to run for state treasurer.

With those two out of the picture, former Congresswoman Katie Porter became the frontrunner, more or less by default, but with underwhelming support — 17% in a poll by UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, released in late August. Her standing may have reflected nothing more than name recognition from her losing campaign for U.S. senator last year.

This week Toni Atkins, former president pro tem of the state Senate, also ended her campaign, saying she could see no pathway to victory. A few other Democrats remain, most notably former Biden administration official and state Attorney General Xavier Becerra and former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. Mostly, however, we are seeing just preliminary

skirmishing among those still in the race, because we're still waiting to see who else might run.

After the departure of Harris and Kounalakis, another name popped up in media speculation: U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla.

It's difficult to understand why Padilla, who holds one of the nation's most coveted political offices and could remain in the Senate for the rest of his life, would want to seek no more than eight years as governor.

Does he really want to deal with California's plethora of infinitely difficult, unresolved issues, such as homelessness, housing shortages, water supply uncertainty, economic stagnation and, perhaps trickiest of all, a chronic multibillion-dollar budget deficit?

Were Padilla to give up his Senate seat for the governorship, as Republican Pete Wilson did in 1990, the only logical motive would be civic duty — he thinks California needs him to weather its crises.

Meanwhile, we're waiting for another potential candidate, Rick Caruso, to also declare intentions. The very wealthy Los Angeles businessman ran a credible but unsuccessful race for mayor of his city after switching his party identification from Republican to Democrat and could draw support from moderate voters and interest groups of both parties. He says he's weighing a race.

*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. ★*



### Mississippi, Not California, is the Education Future

A miracle defies the laws of nature. This is why "the Mississippi Miracle," the sobriquet for the extraordinary gains that students in the Gulf state have made in reading in recent years, is a misnomer.

There's nothing miraculous about a state that adopts phonics and that sets high standards for its kids to get better results in reading instruction. This, to the contrary, is a predictable outcome, and a replicable one, as other Southern states that have taken up similar policies have shown.

Mississippi went from 49th in fourth-grade reading results on the National Assessment about a decade ago to 9th in 2024. Its low-income children are ranked first in the nation. It's Black kids are number three in the nation and it's Hispanic kids number one. Overall, when adjusted for socioeconomic and demographics, Mississippi has the best fourth-grade results in the nation.

The derisive cliché was always, "Thank God for Mississippi," since it could be trusted to save other states from coming in 50th in various metrics. Now, the phrase can be used with sincerity and admiration, since the state recognized and did something about its literacy crisis.

In 2011, about four out

of five fourth graders in Mississippi weren't proficient in reading. In 2013, the state passed a reform to require teachers to understand the science of reading (basically, phonics), to deploy literacy coaches to schools, to identify students struggling to read early, and to hold back students in third grade who weren't ready to advance.

Alabama, Tennessee and Louisiana have now done much the same, and have also made gains. The original source of all this was a 2002 reading law in Florida that boosted student achievement in the Sunshine State.

In a piece headlined "Illiteracy is a policy choice" at the website The Argument, Kelsey Piper makes the case that it would be irresponsible and wrong to ignore the lesson of Mississippi and the Southern states.

She notes that Mississippi outperforms her native California, even though the Golden State is richer and spends substantially more on education per pupil. More than half of Black fourth graders in Mississippi are at or above basic level, while only 28% of Black fourth graders in California are.

It may be galling for Blue States that have prided themselves on their commitment to education and looked down on the South to have to acknowledge that Mississippi, of all places, has figured out a model for the nation, but it is imperative all the same.

"We have been spending lots of money on schools," Piper writes of Blue States, "but we have not been willing to muster the polit-

ical will and effort necessary to hold those schools accountable for results and adopt teaching practices that actually work."

The so-called reading wars between the whole-language approach and phonics was won, on the merits, by phonics long ago. Yet, ineffectual methods hung around even though they'd been discredited. This is why it's so important to get teachers to embrace research-based reading instruction.

There must also be high expectations, rigorously enforced. This is what the Mississippi third-grade retention policy is about. If a teacher and a parent know that a child is going to be held back, they will do all they can to get that child to basic proficiency. Research in Florida shows that getting held back not only helps the academic performance of the students who are retained, but their younger siblings as well.

With reading scores nationally sliding the wrong way, especially for the bottom 10% of students, Mississippi and the other Southern states offer a beacon of hope. Their example shows that, no, it's not impossible to teach children, and no, it's not very costly. It's a good sign that even California just passed a phonics bill.

It's fully within our power, so long as we insist on the basics, to give kids a skill absolutely essential to their development and their futures. No miracles necessary.

*Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.*

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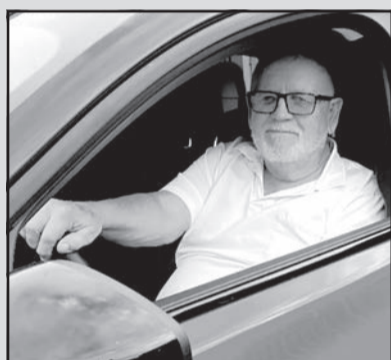
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## SECURITY LOGS

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 [rmcsd.com](http://rmcsd.com).

**Sept. 23**

4:40 p.m., Patrol, while on routine patrol of North back area, Granlees Dam, located a Dodge Dakota pickup parked near the dam, vehicle unoccupied. Located driver of the vehicle at the dam. Resident not present with a guest. Advised of trespass, requested to leave area. Driver complied without any incident.

5:20 p.m., Lindero Lane, RMA Rule Violation: Guest without resident, north back area at Granlees Dam. Citation issued.

**Sept. 24**

11:55 a.m., Black Mercedes Benz parked near Main Lift South just north of the wood bridge. Original caller advised he observed the owner exit the vehicle with a dog after driving the vehicle across the wood bridge.

Sgt. Arino arrived to the area, locating the vehicle. Plate does not come ack to an address in the system.

After further inspection dog tags were found hanging in the rear-view mirror. Dispatch ran all info given coming back with negative results.

Sgt. Arino conducted a search of the immediate area to attempt to locate the owner but no one was located in the area matching the description given by the caller.

**Sept. 25**

3:35 p.m., Located Ford F150 on Celebrar Street blocking traffic lane. Located driver, loading patio equipment. RMCS D patrol remained at location for traffic assist. Driver cleared the traffic lane once finished loading the vehicle.

**Sept. 27**

12:10 a.m., Cantova Way: Large branch of tree on OE3 property broke and is blocking most of Cantova Way. There is enough room for vehicles to pass. Cones placed and RMA Maintenance contacted. Follow-up report also written. Branch isn't an emergency but will need to be removed by special workers.

1:46 a.m., Highway 16 westbound 1/4-mile past South Gate before the bridge. Multiple calls about a female on the side of the road who was possibly hit by a vehicle.

Found subject in a ditch on westbound 16. Subject had not been hit but was sitting due to being inebriated.

Subject female with a white blouse with a pineapple pattern and jeans, brown waist long hair. 5'5", average build possible early 30s. A reporting party was also present but stated he wasn't involved. Female subject stood up and began to travel on foot toward South Gate. Sacramento Sheriff's deputy arrived and patrol directed to subject. Subject was escorted home by deputy.

**Sept. 28**

2:43 a.m., Observed vehicle fail to stop at stop signs at first Guadalupe

and Murieta Parkway and then again at Domingo and Murieta Parkway. Subject identified and cited.

**Sept. 29**

5:15 p.m., Report of possible transient subject consuming beer in front of the Burger King. Upon patrol arrival, law enforcement on scene with subject. Subject at this time on foot eastbound on Jackson Road.

11:10 p.m., Two residents found on bikes in docking area behind Bel Air. On approach subjects recognized as residents. Informed them that the docking area was private property, after which they departed.

**Oct. 4**

11:37 p.m., Disabled golf cart at Bridgehouse Lane before the wooden bridge. No one at scene. Owner contacted and agreed to move it as soon as possible.

**Oct. 5**

12:03 a.m., Follow-up to disabled golf cart: Appeared to be hit by another golf cart, which left behind pieces of its windshield.

Minimal damage occurred to golf cart that was left. Recommended resident contact Sacramento Sheriff's Department due to damaged property.

8:04 a.m., Lake Chesbro complaint of green boat with two men catching fish without releasing. Made contact with occupants, explained the rules of the lake; they complied, returning fish.

No further assistance needed. All clear at this time. ★

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# Women's Club Celebrates Oktoberfest at Luncheon

Story and photos by Gail Bullen  
River Valley Times Reporter

**RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)** - Members of the Rancho Murieta Women's Club swayed side to side during the Schrunkaln dance, clapped four times to the "Chicken Dance" and all but rolled out the barrels at their Sept. 24 luncheon at the Rancho Murieta Country Club.

Billed as Oktoberfest, the event featured the Hasenpfeffers German Band. The five-piece band set the tone with traditional German tunes typically performed during Oktoberfest celebrations, mixed with a few American sing-alongs. The crowd clearly enjoyed the opening set, but it wasn't until the band launched into an infectious rendition of the "Chicken Dance" that they broke into action.

Nearly everyone joined in - clapping, opening and closing a "beak" with their fingers, and flapping their wings at their tables - while a few even jumped up to dance. Audience participation continued throughout the rest of the show. After the band seemed to be closing with "Auf Wiedersehen," but then unexpectedly finished with "Sweet Caroline," the crowd rewarded the band with a standing ovation.

Attendee Lorraine Luken, seated in front of the band, said she hadn't expected the performance to be so much fun.

"They were peppy, happy and kept my toes tapping," she said. "There were a lot of smiles."

Band leader Freddy



The Hasenpfeffers German Band helps Rancho Murieta Women's Club members celebrate Oktoberfest at their Sept. 24 luncheon.



Accordion player Billy Chiechi strolls through the audience before the concert to get everyone in the mood. Banging their knives and forks are Deborah Kraus, left, and Clare Stubblefield.

Pfeffer also shared his reaction.

"It was great," he said. "We loved all the pretty girls." He quickly added that at 81, he is happily married.

Board member Toni Anania, who oversees programs, introduced the band. She noted that Pfeffer is Dutch and was raised in Germany. After moving to New York, he started his first band before relocating to California, where he leads a jazz group called the Red Hot Peppers. Over the years, he has performed with trumpeter Max Kaminsky, a Dixieland

great, and with Woody Allen. Each September and October, Pfeffer brings together musicians from other bands to play at Oktoberfest events.

The country club rolled out an Oktoberfest-themed buffet, complete with warm pretzel bits smothered in cheese sauce, chicken Schnitzel, a smoky bacon-laced sauerkraut, and rich German chocolate cake to finish on a sweet note.

Board member Vickie Joyner added a festive touch by creating centerpieces for each table with live succulents and tiny gourds.

## Business Program

Board President Bonnie Kirschman exceed a brief business program before the music began. She introduced new members and welcomed three new board members: Laura McAllister, Theresa Ilago and Erin Bailey.

Kirschman also reminded the crowd about the upcoming blood drive on Oct. 27 and noted that Vickie Joyner is coordinating the club's Holiday Home Tour on Dec. 13.

Kirschman said the club is still looking for a couple more homes on the south side to participate.



A roomful of attendees show their enthusiasm for an unexpected final tune: "Sweet Caroline."



Club President Bonnie Kirschman introduces new board members Laura McAllister, left, Theresa Ilago and Erin Bailey.



The Chicken Dance is so irresistible that some attendees get up to dance. From left are Cheryl Cannon, Toni Anania and Bonnie Kirschman.



Jane Miller throws herself into the Chicken Dance.

"So if you know anybody who loves Christmas and might be interested, let us know," she said. "You don't have to decorate the

whole house. It would just be a couple of rooms."

See additional photos at [therivervalleytimes.com](http://therivervalleytimes.com) and on Facebook. ★

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