



RIVER VALLEY TIMES

42ND YEAR • ISSUE 4

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FEBRUARY 27, 2026

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Water Emergency Declaration Stalls After Packed, Divided Hearing



District counsel Patrick Enright outlines the legal requirements for declaring a water emergency during a Rancho Murieta Community Services District hearing Feb. 10 that drew about 230 attendees.

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

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Following a year and a half of organized community efforts urging a development moratorium, the Rancho Murieta Community Services District board took no action Feb. 10 on whether to declare a water shortage emergency.

The public hearing, held at the Rancho Murieta Country Club to accommodate the crowd, drew roughly 230 residents and lasted nearly three hours.



Longtime community advocate Janis Eckard speaks in favor of declaring a water emergency.

After nearly three hours of testimony, Director Randy Jenco moved to adopt the resolution



Catherine Silvera urges the board not to adopt a water emergency declaration.

declaring a water shortage emergency, but it died for lack of a second. Board President John Merchant

then moved to defer the item to a future date, but that motion also failed. The hearing closed without a vote.

Packed Room, High Stakes

The standing-room crowd filled the Murieta Room. Speakers frequently drew applause, underscoring how deeply divided the community has become over water supply, growth and governance.

Legal Framework Outlined

District counsel Patrick Enright provided a detailed

Continued on page 5

Hampton to Oversee Rancho Murieta as East Division Commander



Capt. Shaun Hampton begins a dual role in March as Rancho Cordova chief of police and Sacramento County Sheriff's Department East Division commander, which oversees Rancho Murieta. Courtesy photo

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The City of Rancho Cordova has announced the appointment of Shaun Hampton as the new Rancho Cordova Chief of Police, effective March 2026.

Hampton, a Sheriff's captain with over 25 years of law enforcement experience with the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office, fills the role to be vacated by current Chief of Police Matthew Tamayo, who will retire in March.

This appointment is significant for Rancho Murieta because, in addition to serving as Rancho Cordova's chief of police, Hampton also serves as commander of the Sheriff's Office East Division, based at the Kilgore Police Station in Rancho Cordova.

In 2024, the Sheriff's Office quietly relocated Rancho Murieta from the Central Division to the East Division, a change that immediately began reducing response times, according to Tamayo's comments at a Rancho Murieta community meeting in November 2024.

Hampton is a seasoned law enforcement veteran whose career spans the full range of policing functions, including Corrections, Patrol, Special Enforcement Detail (SWAT), Canine Operations, investigations, patrol supervision, academy instruction, community policing assignments, and public information, as the Sheriff's Office spokesperson. In addition, he has held positions in the Rancho Cordova Police Department as both a patrol sergeant and patrol lieutenant, giving him firsthand knowledge of the department and the

Continued on page 7

Terrata Cuts Ribbon on Murieta Hills Model Home



Jeanine Roach, vice president of sales for Terrata Homes, cuts the ribbon during the Feb. 12 grand opening of the new Murieta Hills community in Rancho Murieta.

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

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - About 30 people gathered Feb. 12 for the grand opening and ribbon-cutting of the Terrata Homes model home and sales office at Murieta Hills in Rancho Murieta.

The event marked the debut of Terrata's first California community. Terrata is the luxury brand of LGI

Homes, Inc., which is headquartered in The Woodlands, Texas.

The model home is located at 7116 Jared Sheldon Drive, within The Residences of Murieta Hills East and West, a 146-acre development adjacent to Stonehouse Park. It is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., though prospective buyers are encouraged to call 833-808-3940 in advance to connect with a sales representative before visiting.

Among those attending the grand

opening were affiliates of Terrata and LGI Homes, subdivision developers Bob and Michelle Keil, and about a half-dozen community members.

Jeanine Roach, vice president of sales for Terrata Homes, welcomed the guests.

"We are surrounded by the folks that have made this possible," Roach said. "We want to start with thanking Michelle and Bob Keil for bringing us into this amazing community."

Continued on page 2

Terrata Cuts Ribbon on Murieta Hills Model Home

Continued from page 1

Calling the project “the beginning of a very exciting venture,” Roach said attendees would see the level of quality Terrata delivers as its luxury brand. After introducing her team and acknowledging other guests, Roach led a toast before stepping outside for the ribbon-cutting. Guests then returned inside to enjoy refreshments and tour the professionally staged model home.



Bob and Michelle Keil, right, toast the opening of the Terrata Homes community. The Keils developed The Residences subdivision with partners.



The Terrata model home at 7116 Jared Sheldon Drive is located within The Residences subdivision adjacent to Stonehouse Park.



Mike Martell reviews display graphics inside the Terrata model home during the grand opening event.

Residences Development

The new Terrata Homes community is located in Unit 1 of The Residences, developed by the Keils and their partners, Doug and Lori Veerkamp of Cameron Park. After the Veerkamps’ engineering and construction firm completed development of the 68 lots in 2025, the partnership – River Canyon Properties – sold 31 lots to Terrata Homes, 34 to Toll Brothers and three custom lots on Puerto Drive to Rancho Murieta residents.

Toll Brothers, which describes itself as the nation’s leading builder of luxury homes, expects to begin selling homes in the community by late 2026, according to a Jan. 29 news release.

Final construction of Unit 2, which includes 130 lots, has been placed on hold while Bob Keil and the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board continue discussions over the need for a third water tank. The proposed tank would supplement the existing Rio Oso tank to serve the additional homes and provide needed emergency

water capacity for current residents. The issue has been under discussion for months without resolution.

Terrata Homes

In a Feb. 11 news release, LGI Homes, Inc. announced the grand opening of Murieta Hills, the first Terrata Homes-branded community in California, located within the guard-gated Rancho Murieta community southeast of Sacramento.

Murieta Hills features open-concept homes ranging from approximately 2,004 to 3,024 square feet with three to five bedrooms. Standard features include hard-surface countertops, 42-inch wood cabinetry, KitchenAid stainless steel appliances and professionally designed landscaping at no additional cost.

Chris Kelly, regional president, described the project as a significant milestone marking Terrata Homes’ entry into the California market. The release also announced the Feb. 12 grand opening.

According to the Terrata Homes at Murieta Hills

website, the builder is offering four floor plans. Prices range from the Aviar, starting at \$799,900 with 2,004 square feet, three bedrooms, and two bathrooms; to the Sherwood, starting at \$999,900 with 3,024 square feet, five bedrooms and three bathrooms.

The model home is the Bel Air, starting at \$869,900 and featuring 2,346 square feet, four bedrooms and 2½ bathrooms. For information, call 833-808-3940 to connect with a sales representative, or view the website: terratahomes.com/california/sacramento/murieta-hills.

LGI Homes, headquartered in The Woodlands, Texas, operates in 36 markets across 21 states and has closed more than 80,000 homes since 2003.

Toll Brothers

In a Jan. 29 news release, Toll Brothers, Inc. announced plans for a new luxury home community in Rancho Murieta called Toll Brothers at Rancho Murieta – Robles Collection.

The community will

feature one- and two-story single-family homes ranging from 3,000 to 3,700 square feet, with four to five bedrooms, 3.5 to 5.5 bathrooms and three-car garages. Site preparation is underway at Campos Verde and Puerto Drive, with sales anticipated to begin in late 2026.

Homes will include open-concept floor plans, architectural detailing and premium personalization options available through the Toll Brothers Design Studio.

Scott Esping, division president of Toll Brothers in Sacramento, described the project as an opportunity for luxury living in one of Sacramento County’s most desirable locations.

Founded in 1967 and headquartered in Pennsylvania, Toll Brothers builds in more than 60 markets nationwide and was recently named Fortune magazine’s No. 1 Most Admired Home Builder for 2026.

River Canyon Properties

Sacramento County

approved and entitled The Residences of Murieta Hills East and West, totaling 198 lots, in 2007, but the project stalled for more than a decade.

In 2018, a broker friend alerted Bob Keil that Residences East – with its 99 approved lots – was available. Seeing an opportunity to return to a community he had long admired, Keil and his wife, Michele, purchased the property. The couple later bought a home on Guadalupe Drive, where they now overlook Residences East from their backyard.

Several years later, the late John Sullivan – known locally for managing the properties of Carol Anderson Ward – purchased Residences West, which also had

99 approved lots. In 2022, Sullivan acquired Residences East from the Keils, then later brought them back in as partners under the entity River Canyon Properties.

After Sullivan’s death in 2023, the Keils approached the owners of Veerkamp General Engineering in Cameron Park, which was already building infrastructure for Unit 1, about joining the partnership. The family-owned firm agreed.

Together, the Keils and Doug and Lori Veerkamp purchased Sullivan’s interest from his estate and chose to retain the partnership’s name, River Canyon Properties.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★



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RMA Board Covers Pickleball, South Gate Work, E-bike Rule

Story and photos by Gail Bullen River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Requests from the Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club, final approval of new e-bike safety rules, long-awaited improvements at the south gate entrance, and an update on the search for a new general manager were among the primary topics at the Rancho Murieta Association board meeting Feb. 17.

The board also approved the purchase of two flail mowers for fuel-mitigation work and a \$31,200 contract for this year's Fourth of July fireworks show.

Pickleball Club Seeks Shade Structures

Pickleball Club President Alan Chase asked the board to partner with the club to install two permanent shade structures at the Stonehouse Park courts, a project estimated at just over \$17,000. The club is requesting \$7,000 from RMA for maintenance department labor, with a \$10,000 Summerfest pledge covering the remaining cost.

Chase said the club, founded in 2019, has raised more than \$20,000 to improve the dedicated pickleball courts at Stonehouse Park and has primarily funded wind-screens and lighting for the facility. He added that club members also maintain and clean the courts with their own volunteer crew.

Club member Jeff Kolhardt added that the courts serve about 184 members and see roughly 15,000 player visits per year. He expressed

disappointment that three additional courts previously discussed have been delayed two to three years due to other projects.

General Manager Rod Hart explained that major 2026 priorities – including south entrance improvements and perimeter security fencing – are consuming available staff time, pushing pickleball court expansion down the list.

Board President Patrick O'Hern asked Chase to work with Hart to finalize details on the shade structure proposal before bringing it back to the board for consideration.

E-bike Rule Adopted to Applause

After months of drafting and revisions, the board unanimously approved a comprehensive e-bike safety rule, drawing applause from all attendees.

Director Scott Adams said the Governing Documents committee began working on the rule in July in response to growing e-bike use within the gates and new state regulations that took effect Jan. 1.

The rule addresses helmet use, lighting and reflector requirements, tampering with manufacturer labels, and modifications to speed. Although California law requires helmets only for certain classes of e-bikes and riders under 18, the RMA rule requires helmets for all riders. The board also agreed to specify that helmets must meet Consumer Product Safety Commission standards.

O'Hern, a former law enforcement officer, cited serious bicycle accident cases he had seen over the years and said higher-speed



Alan Chase, president of the Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club, asks the Rancho Murieta Association board to help fund two new shade structures at the Stonehouse Park courts during the Feb. 17 meeting.



Pickleball Club member Jeff Kolhardt tells the board he is disappointed that funding for three additional courts has been delayed.



Director Ernie Cowles updates the board on the search for a new general manager to replace Rod Hart, who is retiring in May.

e-bikes pose additional risks.

"These things are dangerous," Adams said, noting that Class 3 e-bikes can reach speeds up to 28 miles per hour.

O'Hern added, "That's one of those really critical things that we have an opportunity to do today, to make people safer."

South Gate Work to Begin

Hart reported that demolition of the aging water feature at the Murieta South entrance will begin within two weeks, weather permitting. The existing feature is leaking and considered beyond repair. The maintenance committee has recommended eliminating the water feature and enhancing landscaping instead.

Work will also include surveying and layout for new perimeter security fencing, as well as electrical service planning.

Hart said the south entrance renovation has been pending for about five years.

Equipment Purchases Approved

The board approved the purchase of two upgraded flail mowers for

\$43,548.95, funded from reserves. The equipment will replace three older units used for weed abatement and firebreak work throughout the community.

Maintenance Supervisor Troy Schaffner said the heavier-duty mowers can handle rocks, brush and debris more efficiently and are built stronger than the current units, which require welding repairs several times a year and can be out of service for days at a time.

The board also approved up to \$6,870 from reserves for post-and-cable fencing materials used for ongoing repairs along levees, trails and parks.

Fireworks Contract Approved

Directors approved a \$31,200 contract with Pyrotechnic Spectacular for the July 4 fireworks show, approximately \$10,000 more than last year. Recreation Committee Chair John Havilland said the committee had recommended spending an additional \$5,000 for a special, front-loaded show with enhanced effects to mark the nation's 250th anniversary. The remaining increase in cost was attributed to tariffs.

General Manager Search Update

Director Ernie Cowles reported that nine candidates have applied so far in the search to replace Hart, who is retiring in May.

The board is screening applicants and plans to narrow the field to two or three finalists for interviews. The goal is to bring on a new general manager in early April to allow time for a transition.

Bring Me Home Safe

During his Compliance Committee report, Director Tom Reimers announced that RMA and the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department are developing a voluntary safety initiative called "Bring Me Home Safe."

Reimers said the idea was initiated by RMA Compliance Officer Chris Smith. The program would allow residents to voluntarily register identifying information for loved ones with dementia, Alzheimer's disease or similar conditions who may wander, helping first responders quickly reunite them with family.

Reimers said the effort grew out of recent incidents in which it took

hours to identify lost residents. Application forms are being developed, with broader promotion planned once finalized.

Resident Comment

During public comment, resident Tom Shewchuk thanked management for progress on non-member barcode compliance. He is also working with the Rancho Murieta Community Services District's Water Vision Working Group on efforts to re-permit Lake Clementia as a potential emergency potable or irrigation backup supply during drought conditions. He said the goal would not be to eliminate recreational use of the lake but to ensure water is available in extreme shortages.

Shewchuk also raised questions about the future of the ranchomurieta.com website and whether its historical content could be incorporated into RMA communications, and he once again suggested revisiting the idea of unifying Rancho Murieta's various homeowners associations under a single structure.

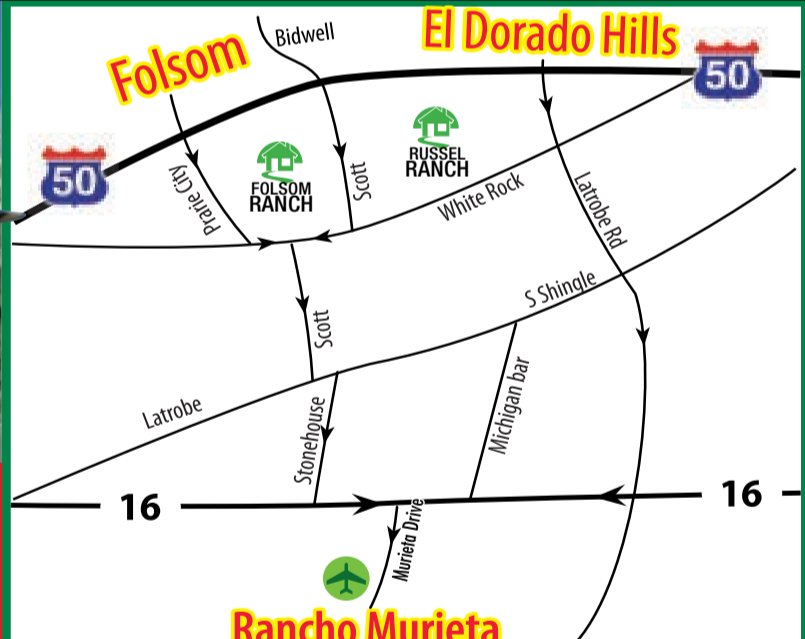
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Development, Reservoirs, New GM are CSD Topics



Rancho Murieta Community Services District Interim Operations Director Travis seeks permanent fencing for the Granlees Dam Forebay to safeguard residents who are ignoring "no trespassing" signs. He discussed the dangerous situation at the Feb. 18 board meeting. Photo courtesy of Rancho Murieta Community Services District

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

A missent letter to a developer, the search for a new general manager, and the impact of recent rains on local reservoirs were among the topics discussed when the Rancho Murieta Community Services District board met Feb. 18.

Directors also tabled proposed changes to the security department and spent considerable time on water issues. See related stories in this issue.

Developer Letter

A mistakenly sent letter triggered a tense exchange at the board meeting.

When directors were asked to approve the consent calendar – minutes and routine items not requiring discussion – Director Tim Maybee requested that a proposed action to rescind a Nov. 19 letter from Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder to developer Bob Keil be pulled for separate review.

In the letter, Wilder told Keil that he and his partners would be required to provide a third water storage tank (estimated to cost at least \$8 million) before the district would issue a water meter for the 51st lot in the 198-lot Residences subdivision.

Saying he wanted to focus on process rather than personalities, Maybee questioned who had directed the general

manager to send such a consequential letter without formal board action.

President John Merchant, who serves on the Ad Hoc Administrative Committee with Director Bill Gere, said the committee had directed the letter. He described its release as the result of a "misunderstanding" during a late-night closed session at the November board meeting.

District Counsel Patrick Enright clarified that Wilder drafted the original letter and that he reviewed it briefly during the closed session. He said it was his understanding that the letter would not be sent until after a committee meeting scheduled about 10 days later. Gere said in the discussion that he didn't participate in drafting the letter.

Maybee asked Enright directly whether it was within the scope of an ad hoc committee to direct the general manager on a matter that should require full board action.

Enright responded that regardless of whether the topic fell within the committee's purview, an ad hoc committee does not have the authority to make or reverse board decisions. He said any such directive should be authorized by the full board.

Asked what impact rescinding the Nov. 19 letter would have on the district's position with the developer, Enright said the district was essentially "in

the same position."

Maybee then sought clarification on who was handling negotiations moving forward.

"As a point of order, you've been directed by the board, on behalf of the board, to negotiate with developers, correct?" he asked.

"That's my understanding," Enright replied.

The general counsel said he is drafting a new letter to Keil and his attorney outlining "exactly what the district's asking" for project approval. The draft will be brought back to the board before it is sent, he said, "so that we're all on the same page as to exactly what we're requesting."

During public comment, Keil criticized what he called Wilder's "very unprofessional letter" and what he described as a broader pattern behind it. He said responding to the letter cost him \$25,000 in attorney and engineering fees.

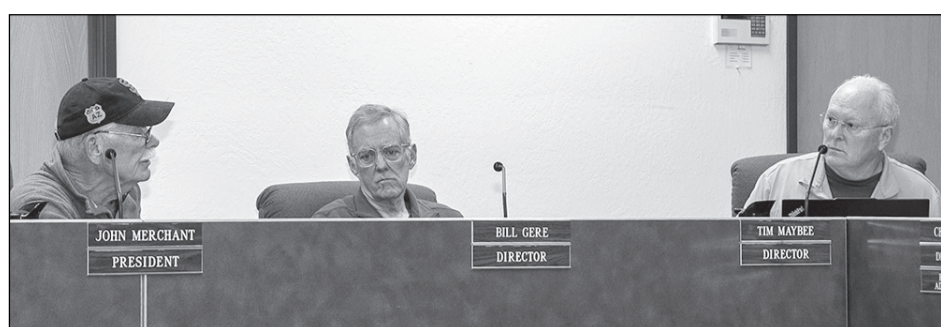
Keil also accused one unnamed board member of acting as a "rogue" director.

"I've given you a 16-page example of everything that he's done, but yet, because it is a closed session, we can't really discuss it," he told the board.

Gere made the motion to rescind the letter, which the board approved unanimously.

Reservoirs, Granlees Dam

Interim Director



From left, President John Merchant, Director Bill Gere and Director Tim Maybee discuss a mistakenly sent letter at the board meeting. Photo by Gail Bullen



Developer Bob Keil explains that a missent letter cost him \$25,000 in attorney and engineering fees. Photo by Gail Bullen

of Operations Travis Bohannon reported that recent storms dropped about 4.3 inches of rain in three days, leaving the raw water system nearly full: Clementia and Calero are spilling, and Chesbro is about 93% full.

Because storage is so high and the Cosumnes is running high and muddy, the district has shut off the Granlees pumps and will wait for better water quality before resuming diversions. He added that the wastewater ponds are about 60% full, so the district is now managing an abundance of water in both reservoirs and wastewater storage, rather than a shortage.

On a more somber note, Bohannon told the board that while the forebay at Granlees Dam was running high from recent storms, a resident ignored multiple "Keep Off/No Trespassing" signs and walked to the edge to take photographs. A staff member on site pointed out the warning signs, he said, but "they just completely

ignored him and continued to do what they were doing."

Bohannon stressed that when flows are that high, "it's not safe" and said the incident underscored both the district's liability exposure and the need to move forward with plans for permanent fencing around the forebay.

"No matter how many signs we put up, people just don't listen," he said.

General Manager

The board also considered a revised general manager job description, the result of several months of work by the Personnel Committee.

Committee Chair Linda Butler said the panel's first priority was to clearly separate the board's role from the general manager's role, using the California Special Districts Association Board Member Handbook and government code as guides. The revision also reaffirms that the general manager "serves at the pleasure of the board" and is responsible for

implementing the board's mission and objectives.

Butler said the update primarily clarifies and tightens the language, breaking up what she described as "word salad" into more clearly defined duties. She emphasized that the GM's performance should be regularly reviewed by the board and that the position is not a remote job. The revised description, she said, is intended to provide a more practical framework as the district recruits a permanent general manager.

The board unanimously approved the updated job description.

In her report, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder said she has already begun the process of hiring a search firm and expects to bring three proposals to the board at its March meeting.

Other Business

Director of Finance and Administration Cecilia Min reported that she has paused her work on the 2023-24 and 2024-25 audits until mid-March in order to prepare a preliminary budget for 2026-27. Other staff members are continuing audit work in the meantime.

The board approved a job description for an operations manager, accepted a grant deed for the Riverview subdivision detention pond and approved a \$16,641 contract for annual fats, oils, and grease (FOG) inspections of commercial kitchens.

The board's next meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 18.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

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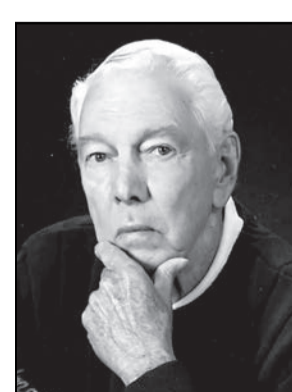
Lyle Mason Fowler, 92, passed away peacefully on January 2, 2026, in Rancho Murieta, California. A devoted public servant, Navy veteran, and beloved family man, Lyle lived a full and vibrant life.

Born on September 9, 1933, in Stockton, California, Lyle served honorably in the United States Navy at the US Naval Station in San Diego, California. He then embarked on a distinguished career in public service that eventually took him across the country to our nation's capital. His work spanned several esteemed institutions including the California Department of Justice, the CIA, and the United States Secret Service. Through these roles, Lyle contributed meaningfully to the safety and integrity of both his state and nation.

Lyle's professional accomplishments were matched by his rich personal life. He shared sixty-seven cherished years with his wife Elaine Fowler. Together they raised three children: Denise Balunda, David Fowler (Eva), and Kenneth Fowler (Kirsten). He had nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Lyle found immense joy in spending time with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, whether watching games, sharing holidays, or simply sharing stories and laughter.

Known for his personable nature, sharp wit, and intelligence, Lyle made those he counted as friends feel welcome and valued. He was an avid golfer and had a group of men he played with for many years and could always be counted on to help the group with a low score. He loved vacations at the beach on both coasts and took his family on tons of other great adventures. He also enjoyed baseball, fishing, and reading.

A Celebration of Life will be held on March 14, 2026, at 1:00 PM at the Rancho Murieta Community Church 14670 Cantova Way with a reception to follow.



Water Is Major Focus at CSD Board Meeting

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Water dominated much of the discussion at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District board meeting on Feb. 18.

The first topic was non-agendized feedback from the Feb. 10 water shortage emergency hearing, including conflicting views on groundwater supply, a rancher's offer of free water, and concerns about a resolution added to the agenda.

The second major focus was an update from the Water Vision working group on progress toward siting groundwater wells, evaluating the potential use of Lake Clementia and pursuing an Urban Water Management Plan.

In other business, the board considered major changes to the Security Department. See separate story.

Directors also discussed development issues, the effect of recent rains on local reservoirs, and a revised job description for a new general manager. See related story.

Conflicting Well Information

Longtime community advocate Janis Eckard spoke during public comments to rebut claims from the Feb. 10 emergency water hearing that CSD "dropped the ball" on drilling a well and thereby lost Proposition 84 grant money, and that Rancho Murieta has "plenty of well water."

Eckard said the grant

could not legally be used to drill a well for a private beneficiary and that the well was never drilled because the district and landowner couldn't reach a financial agreement, not due to neglect. Citing past well studies, she argued the "plenty of water" claim is also unsupported and submitted a Feb. 12 letter with her analysis. Her detailed letter is in the board packet.

Eckard charged that the district's water planning has long omitted the key system capacity figure — how many connections the existing supply can safely support — and that a working group she served on found inaccuracies in the draft Integrated Water Master Plan that understate the true deficit. She urged the board to correct past errors by commissioning a genuinely fact based planning document or an Urban Water Management Plan so the community finally knows "once and for all" how many hookups the current supply can sustain.

Developer representative Jeff Pearson began by saying he "can sure appreciate and respect the amount of time that Ms. Eckert spent preparing that February 12 letter," calling it "no small thing" and acknowledging her dedication, but said he wanted to offer "an alternative viewpoint."

Pearson questioned Eckard's assumption that the district has a 3,000 acre-feet shortfall and that wells would run continuously to meet that demand.

"There's no reasonable scenario where this community needs that amount of water" pumped that way once drought-year conservation rules are in effect,



Jay Schneider explains how the district could get "free" water from his ranch.

he said.

Free Well Water

Rancher Jay Schneider surprised everyone at the Feb. 10 hearing by saying he would supply free water to the district from a well the district had drilled on his property in 2002. He provided more details at the board meeting.

Schneider told the directors that the district could use an existing high capacity well on his ranch and similar nearby wells (on the south side of the Cosumnes River upstream from the Dillard Bridge). Under his idea, those wells would pump groundwater into the river downstream, and the district would then divert an equivalent amount upstream at Rancho Murieta, using the river as the "pipeline" so long as no intervening landowners are harmed.

Schneider said he would not charge for use of his land, characterizing the water as essentially "free" to the district, with the only costs being the pumps, pipelines and operations needed to move it.

Interim Operations Manager Travis Bohannon emphasized that while the water might be free, "free water costs a lot of money to move it from one place," pointing to the substantial infrastructure and operating costs of pumps, power and conveyance that weren't explained.

Water group member Tom Shewchuk added that, regardless of cost, using Schneider's well to pump into the river and then divert upstream would not satisfy a state law requirement for a local backup water supply.

Water Shortage Resolution

Director Tim Maybee brought up another issue related to the Feb. 10 emergency water shortage hearing. He said his recollection from the closed session (at the Jan. 21 board meeting) was that there would be no resolution or action item placed on the Feb. 10 agenda, while President John Merchant said he understood the opposite: that "the discussion we had

was putting the resolution on the agenda... so we had the option of taking action or not."

When Maybee raised the same question at the end of the Feb. 10 hearing, Merchant said he had placed the resolution on the agenda.

District Counsel Patrick Enright told Maybee the Feb. 10 emergency declaration resolution was an older draft he had started months earlier and then forwarded on short notice the Friday before the hearing, saying he "didn't have time" to prepare a new, fully developed resolution and findings for that meeting.

Water Group Report

Director Randy Jenco reported that the Water Vision Working Group is focusing on three primary tasks: new wells, Clementia and the district's Urban Water Management Plan.

On wells, the group is recommending test drilling at two locations — one on Murieta Equestrian Center property and another on Sacramento County parkland — and is also evaluating production well sites previously identified by Dunn Engineering as promising.

Jenco said Sacramento County has expressed interest in cooperating, but the district would need to negotiate easements and agreements with property owners. He added that the board may need to retain specialized water-law counsel as the effort moves forward.

Regarding Clementia, Jenco said the district has begun examining regulatory requirements if the

lake is to serve as a potable water source. State regulators have provided examples from other agencies that operate lakes for both recreation and drinking water.

On the Urban Water Management Plan, Jenco said Water Systems Consultants declined to take on the assignment as an additional task due to workload constraints. Staff will instead prepare a request for qualifications to seek proposals from other firms.

Tom Shewchuk, a member of the water working group, suggested it take on a fourth task: auditing how all water is used in Rancho Murieta. Describing himself as a data guy, Shewchuk said he wants to "treat water like money," working with staff to analyze meter and billing data so the district can see exactly where water goes, how much different users take and where conservation or efficiency improvements are possible.

During public comment, resident Carol Pranzo asked the board to appoint Jim Farrell to the working group as a second community representative. Farrell said he would be willing to serve if appointed.

Current members include Director Randy Jenco and Interim Operations Director Travis Bohannon, representing the district; General Manager Rod Hart for the Rancho Murieta Association; Tom Shewchuk as the community representative; and Jeff Pearson representing the developers.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

Water Emergency Declaration Stalls After Packed, Divided Hearing

Continued from page 1

presentation, at times hampered by microphone issues. He reviewed the legal requirements under California Water Code section 350, which requires the board to determine that ordinary water demands cannot be met without compromising essential needs such as sanitation and fire protection.

He referenced the 2024 draft Integrated Water Master Plan, which concludes the district may lack adequate supply during extended drought without augmentation, and cited Senate Bill 552, adopted in 2021, requiring small water systems to demonstrate drought resiliency and identify a backup source.

Enright noted the district relies solely on winter diversions from the Cosumnes River and outlined potential augmentation options, including groundwater wells, possible use of Lake Clementia, water banking and interties with neighboring systems.

Attorney Warns of Legal Fallout

Ten speakers opposed declaring a water emergency, warning of litigation and financial consequences.

Ellen Moskal, an attorney representing Rancho Murieta Properties, argued the draft 2024 water plan does not constitute substantial evidence under state law because it has not been finalized or adopted. She said the proposed resolution was legally ambiguous, declaring an emergency without defining what restrictions would follow, and warned the district could face costly



Director Bill Gere explains why he is not ready to support the water emergency resolution. To his left is Director Tim Maybee, and to his right is Board President John Merchant.

lawsuits.

Several other speakers echoed those concerns. Mike Metzger said he respects the passion of SOLOS (Save Our Lakes & Open Spaces) and the more than 2,000 residents who signed its development moratorium petition, but he described the situation as a long-standing leadership failure rather than an emergency. He argued the district has had years to address water augmentation and has not followed through.

Jeff Burkheimer argued there is no immediate shortage and said a formal Water Supply Assessment would still be required before Rancho North construction proceeds. He warned a moratorium could expose ratepayers to tens of millions of dollars in legal and infrastructure costs.

Catherine Silvera said the draft study "would not stand up in court." Tom Shewchuk urged the board to finalize and vet the water data before taking such a consequential step.

Judy Bernal said imposing a moratorium on new water connections could

negatively affect property rights, lending and home equity, warning it could depress property values and invite legal challenges.

Jeff Pearson, Rancho Murieta Properties' project manager, said significant groundwater work had been done in past years before being halted by the district.

"Please don't vote to stop again," he said. "We have momentum. We have a willing landowner. We have a willing group within the district that's working. Let's move forward and solve this problem."

Tony Velez, RMP's chief financial officer, said the developer owns much of the open space and golf course property used by residents and would be essential to any future infrastructure expansion.

"We are not the problem. We are part of the solution," he said.

Supporters Cite Drought Risk

Nine residents spoke in favor of declaring a water emergency, arguing that waiting could put the community at risk during the next severe drought.

Janis Eckard said she has reviewed district water studies dating back to 1989 and believes the district has consistently overestimated available supply. She emphasized that Rancho Murieta lacks sufficient reservoir storage and has never secured a confirmed backup water source.

"Rancho Murieta needs to know how many homes can be safely supported by the existing water supply," Eckard said. "And taking a pause to get this right by issuing a water emergency is a step in the right direction."

Jim Farrell warned the community "will run out of water" if confronted with another severe drought and called for an independent consultant to reconcile disputed data.

Several additional speakers did not explicitly weigh in on whether a moratorium should be enacted but addressed related issues, including wildfire evacuation concerns, storage capacity, regulatory timelines and the accuracy of the district's acre-foot demand calculations. Others emphasized the need for collaboration,

careful review of water supply data and long-term planning.

Realtor Deb Brittan expressed frustration over the division within the community and closed her remarks with an emotional prayer.

Groundwater Debate Resurfaces

Groundwater again surfaced as a central issue.

Certified hydrogeologist Patrick Dunn said multiple studies over the decades, including his, have identified viable groundwater resources but were halted before production wells were installed.

Sloughhouse rancher Jay Schneider said the district drilled a well on his ranch in 2002 as part of an earlier effort to secure a secondary supply and later capped it. He offered again to allow the district to use the well at no cost.

In a letter read at the meeting, Rancho Murieta geologist Greg Wheeler cautioned that large-capacity production wells within the community may be limited by local hydrogeologic conditions, reinforcing longstanding questions about whether sufficient groundwater can be developed inside district boundaries.

Board Divided

The board appeared divided on how to proceed.

Before joining the board, Merchant spearheaded a 2024 SOLOS petition seeking a development moratorium that garnered more than 2,000 signatures. Merchant and Directors Linda Butler and Bill Gere previously voted to move forward with the water emergency declaration process, while

Directors Jenco and Tim Maybee have opposed it.

During board comments, Maybee questioned why the resolution had been placed on the agenda after what he described as a prior closed-session consensus not to move forward. Merchant said he directed it be agendized so the board could consider it.

Gere said he was not ready to support the resolution and wanted more time to review the information and speak with stakeholders.

Jenco reiterated his belief that declaring an emergency would likely result in costly litigation that ratepayers would ultimately fund.

Merchant spoke at length about what he described as deficiencies in past water studies, the need for a confirmed secondary supply and uncertainty surrounding groundwater capacity.

When Merchant called for a motion, Jenco moved to adopt the resolution. It failed for lack of a second. Merchant then moved to defer the matter, but that motion also received no second. The board unanimously voted to adjourn.

County Supervisor Attends

Sacramento County Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez attended the hearing and later told the River Valley Times she was present because the issue is "a hot topic" in her district. She expressed confidence the community would ultimately find a resolution.

The 428-page agenda packet, including counsel's PowerPoint presentation and the full audio recording of the meeting, is on the district's website.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Break the Losing Streak

As previously stated, the Sacramento Kings are setting records, albeit not the ones they want to.

Entering Monday night's game against the Grizzlies on the road, the Kings will try to call a halt to a 16-game losing streak and give the Sacramento fan base a reason for optimism.

Injuries, bad coaching and a front office that still needs to find their way have all contributed to the worst record in the NBA, and few pundits or fans expected to find this team in the NBA cellar.

Allowing Sabonis and Lavine to surgically repair their injuries ending the season for both, makes loads of sense as there remains no possibility of making the playoffs, and having both critical players healthy entering next season will be a welcome relief as the Kings look for a 180-degree turn.

Looking for bright spots is a little like looking for a needle in a haystack, but without question seeing Keegan Murry finally healthy and making a contribution nightly, is a more than welcome sight.

In the most recent game against the Spurs, Keegan led the Kings in scoring 20 points along with DeMar DeRozan, and although not the all-star that the Kings initially thought he might be, Keegan is making noises like he's going to someone to count on as the team continues to shuffle the deck.

What will the upcoming draft bring the cellar dwellers? Anyone's guess, but you can rest assured that GM Scott Perry has his sights set on coming up with a game changer.

We've seen franchises do it before, and you need look no further than the Oklahoma City Thunder or the Detroit Pistons to see the results. Yes, it can happen, and the only caveat is the past experiences in the draft that have been abysmal.

No more Willie Cauly-Stein's or Marvin Bagley's! What the Kings need is a can't miss, blue chipper that will impact this team in a positive way right out of the gate!

Can it be done? Yes, it absolutely can, if Scott Perry and staff are permitted to do their job without interference from the

ownership group. Let the people you've hired do their job and stand on the decisions they make.

Another DeAaron Fox or Tyrese Haliburton may be just around the corner, and goodness knows the Kings are overdue for something positive to happen.

Another key will be how they evaluate the talent that already exists. Will the Kings value Domantas Sabonis and realize what a true diamond in the rough they have? At this point no one knows and we can only wait and see what happens.

What everyone agrees on is bringing a 16-game losing streak to a halt and stemming a conversation of challenging the all-time futility record set by the Detroit Pistons. Although 16 is a fall cry from the 28-game losing streak set by the Pistons, it's just better to put that conversation to bed.

1st round draft choices need to be vetted carefully, and the Kings have yet to fully see what Devin Carter brings to the table. Everyone knows he can jump out of the gym, and at times his defense is all-star caliber, but can this 1st round draft choice get enough court time to prove his worth. We'll see, but I take nothing for granted.

Enter Killian Hayes, a 6'4" guard just signed to a 10-day contract. I wasn't aware the Kings needed another guard but here he is, nonetheless. What is interesting about Killian is that he was drafted #7 overall in the 2020 draft by the Detroit Pistons and is still only 24 years of age. Raised in France can he make a splash?

At the same time the Kings signed Patrick Baldwin Jr. to a 2-way contract and at 6'10" Patrick brings some much needed girth to the front line. Baldwin was signed by the Golden State Warriors 28th in the overall 2022 draft so Kings fans have renewed reason to show up for the March 3 contest at Golden One against the Phoenix Suns.

Yes, Scott Perry is trying, and that's better than giving up. Are these guys longshot? They are, and we need to turn out and give them the best we have.

Stay tuned Kings fans and don't lose heart.

All the best!

★

California School Systems Face Red Ink Despite Boosts in Education Spending



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Educating California's nearly 6 million public school students is the state budget's second largest expenditure, and one that has increased sharply during Gavin Newsom's governorship.

The 2026-27 budget that Newsom proposed last month would spend \$88.7 billion on students, ranging from transitional kindergartners to high school seniors. When local property taxes and federal aid are included, the total would be nearly \$150 billion, an average of \$27,418 per pupil.

That's a 61% increase from the \$17,014 they were getting when Newsom became governor, but adjusting for 29% inflation during that period would cut the real gain in half.

Comparing California's school support to that of other states is difficult because there's always a lag in data collection. However, the Public Policy Institute of California, using data that are a few years old, reports that the state is no longer in the lower ranks in per pupil spending but is somewhere in the middle, perhaps a few thousand dollars above average.

Education officials constantly press for more state spending, which is governed by complicated formulas in a 1988 ballot measure,

Proposition 98. Newsom's budget calculates that the minimum Prop. 98 guarantee in state and local funds would be \$125.5 billion, but he wants to delay \$5.6 billion in payments to reduce the budget's deficit – essentially a loan from the schools to the state, one of many maneuvers he and the Legislature have used to close the gap between revenue and spending.

"This delay shifts costs to the future when the state must 'settle up' and meet this obligation," the Legislature's fiscal analyst, Gabe Petek, says in his overview of the schools budget, adding, "For the state budget, the settle-up proposal is similar to other forms of borrowing and spending delays – it provides temporary savings in the current year but increases costs in the future."

Calculating what the state is legally obligated to spend on schools, deciding what it will spend, massaging the numbers and framing the political optics is a time-dishonored feature of the annual budget process because it's such a big piece of the puzzle.

Meanwhile, however, school districts throughout the state are having remarkable difficulty in balancing their own budgets this year. They face declining enrollments due to demographic factors such as falling birth rates, lower immigration, population losses to other states, local resistance to school closures and pressure from unions for salary increases for teachers and support staff, to cope with their own inflationary pressures.

The fiscal angst is most obvious in urban school

districts, where enrollment declines are most severe and where unions are the strongest, often spending heavily to elect friendly school board members.

San Francisco's school system just underwent a teacher strike that was settled with an agreement that will raise costs by an estimated \$180 million-plus, leaving great uncertainty over how it will find the money.

Sacramento's schools have been teetering on the edge of insolvency for years due to outlays that are markedly greater than income. It could be compelled to accept a fiscal overseer if it needs a state bailout.

Los Angeles Unified, the nation's second largest school system, is facing a \$191 million deficit, the latest in a string of budget gaps.

Educators and their unions say their problems could be solved if only they had more state aid. But raising per pupil spending by \$1,000 would cost nearly \$6 billion a year, and increasing it to \$30,000-plus to match the top tier of states, such as New York, would cost at least \$30 billion.

With the state budget already plagued by chronic deficits in the \$20 billion range, just giving schools their constitutional level of financing will fall \$5.6 billion short under Newsom's budget.

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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Social Security Matters

My Friend is 65; Shouldn't She Be Exempt from Medicare Payroll Taxes?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: My girlfriend is 65 and she just enrolled in Medicare. She is still working full time as a nurse, but they are still deducting Medicare taxes from her paycheck. I thought as soon as you started Medicare, that they would no longer take any Medicare taxes from her paychecks. Is that not correct? **Signed: Concerned Friend**

Dear Concerned Friend: Your understanding about Medicare payroll tax is, indeed, not correct. Medicare taxes are levied on everyone who works and earns, regardless of whether or not they are currently enrolled in the Medicare program. That is how Medicare has worked since it was first enacted in the mid-1960s and how it still works today.

FYI, everyone who works for an employer must pay "FICA" (Federal

Insurance Contributions Act) payroll tax of 7.65%. Most (6.2%) of that payroll tax goes to support Social Security, but 1.45% goes to support Medicare Part A. Self-employed individuals must also pay this tax under the Self-Employed Contributions Act (SECA) which is equivalent to FICA, except the self-employed individual must also pay the employer portion of the payroll tax. The Social Security portion of the FICA/SECA tax has an earnings cap (\$184,500 in 2026), but there is no cap on earnings for the Medicare portion of the FICA/SECA payroll tax. FYI, employers pay an equivalent amount of Social Security and Medicare taxes, and the Medicare portion of the payroll tax is paid on all earnings (there is no cap on earnings from which the Medicare payroll tax is withheld).

To ensure understanding, Medicare Part A provides healthcare coverage for inpatient hospitalization services, and Medicare Part B provides coverage for outpatient medical services (doctors, medical tests, etc.). That 1.45% of the FICA (and SECA) tax of the self-employed) is paid by those who work to help fund the

Medicare Part A program, which is premium-free for most Americans after age 65. For Medicare Part B, there is a separate premium which helps pay for Medicare outpatient healthcare services. The standard Medicare Part B premium for 2026 is \$202.90 per month, compared to Medicare Part A which is free to all who are eligible for Social Security benefits. But the 1.45% payroll tax which is being withheld from your girlfriend's paycheck is paid by everyone who has work earnings, even if they are enrolled in Medicare.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/proxy/social-security-dvisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

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The Greatest Sports Story Ever Told

tremely demanding style forged a group of college kids into a historic team. (The Olympics back then were for amateurs, although the Soviets were professional in all but name.)

Brooks was obsessed with Soviet hockey and wanted to turn its insights against it. His team would be physically tough, but would be able to skate and pass too, and be better conditioned than anyone else, giving it better legs in the third period.

The U.S. team compiled an impressive record during the exhibition season. But the Soviets were giants. They'd won the gold at every single Olympics since 1964. During this run, their combined Olympic record was 27-1-1, and they had outscored the opposition 175-44.

The U.S. played an exhibition game against the Soviets at Madison Square Garden right before the Games and got crushed 10-3.

At the Olympics, the U.S. managed a last-minute tie against Sweden and then manhandled a good Czech team, 7-3. As they racked up more wins, they caught the nation's attention, but the Soviets awaited in the medal round.

No one gave the U.S. a chance. Al Michaels says he was just hoping it'd still be close, say, the Soviets up 3-1, in the middle of the game.

Brooks delivered a famous pre-game St. Crispin's Day speech to his team: "This moment is yours." The coach's

grown children show the documentarians the card that he wrote his notes on -- surely one of the most precious relics in the history of U.S. sports.

The U.S. emerged tied with the Soviets 2-2 after one period, and survived an onslaught in the second, getting outshot 12-2 but trailing only 3-2. Then, magic happened in the third. Team captain Mike Eruzione scored his iconic goal to put the U.S. up 4-3.

Ten minutes of Al Michaels-narrated agony ensued as the U.S. had to protect the lead against an explosive Soviet team. The U.S. still had to beat the Finns for the gold. True to form, Brooks ran his team through punishing drills to prepare, even after they'd become national heroes.

Ordinary sports creates an ersatz nationalism, with fans feeling a deep connection to their own team, to its history, colors and past heroes. When this sports patriotism was combined with the real thing in 1980 -- especially when arrayed against an aggressive, malign rival power -- the effect was explosive.

The documentary shows the U.S. players walking down the street in Lake Placid. Forty-five years later, people still stop them and yell out their thanks. They showed that miracles happen, and did it for the red, white and blue.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. (c) 2026 by King Features Synd., Inc.

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WE SUPPORT
FIRST RESPONDERS



CSD Tables Security Department Changes

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Security policy took center stage at the Feb. 18 meeting of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District board, where directors spent nearly an hour weighing a proposed restructuring of the Security Department, revisions to job descriptions and authorization of Tasers.

In the end, the board voted unanimously to table the item until March, citing unanswered questions about funding in the upcoming budget cycle and because the union has not yet responded to the proposed job description changes.

The debate exposed differing views over how far the district's security force should move beyond a traditional "observe and report" role, and how much operational and liability risk the district is prepared to accept.

Butler: Align Titles and Duties

Director Linda Butler, who chairs the Security Committee, introduced the item by reminding her colleagues that the board had previously discussed moving away from the Community Service Officer model and returning to a Security Patrol Officer I and II structure.

"Basically, that's what we've done," Butler said, referring to discussions that date back to August.

Butler contended that the CSO classification is not a good fit for Rancho Murieta's structure. Community Service Officers are typically employed by cities or sheriff's departments, she said, an arrangement that does not apply in Rancho Murieta. In her view, the existing CSO job description "does not fulfill the requirements to provide a safe and secure community," and she recommended adopting updated Patrol Officer I and II classifications instead.

She then turned the presentation over to Security Sgt. Brandon Arino.

"Brandon is going to give you a complete review ... observe and report, what our security patrol and officers do, and patrol officers in particular," Butler said.

Arino: Observe and Report

Arino's report outlined what he described as an "observe, report and intervene when safe" operational model.

"For the purpose of district security, security patrol officers are employed by the district to help protect life and property within the

community," Arino said. "Security patrol officers are not police officers and do not replace law enforcement. Instead, they work alongside law enforcement agencies to enhance safety and provide additional community support."

He described a patrol structure that includes approximately 66 checkpoints during an eight-hour shift, with each stop lasting two to five minutes. Those checkpoints cover CSD facilities, Rancho Murieta Association properties and commercial areas, accounting for roughly five hours of a typical shift.

Daily duties include conducting vacation checks, responding to resident complaints, enforcing RMA and district rules such as parking and noise restrictions, assisting emergency responders and documenting incidents. The overarching goal, Arino said, is deterrence through visibility and a consistent security presence.

Common calls for service include burglary and panic alarms, suspicious persons or vehicles, prowler reports, noise complaints, welfare checks, animal issues, smoke or unattended campfire concerns and DUI complaints, the latter limited to observation and notification of the California Highway Patrol.

Arino also underscored what officers do not do. They do not pursue suspects, conduct criminal investigations, initiate traffic stops or respond directly to domestic violence, weapons-related or suicide calls.

Under his proposal, the board would:

Acknowledge the observe, report, and intervene framework;

Affirm continued authorization of batons, OC spray and handcuffs;

Approve Tasers as an additional, less-lethal option, subject to a comprehensive policy and state-compliant training; and

Adopt updated Patrol Officer I and II job descriptions to align with current duties.

Arino framed the proposed changes as a way to "enhance officer and community safety, reduce injury and liability exposure, support de-escalation practices, align classifications with actual duties, maintain modern non-firearm security standards and strengthen policy defensibility."

Maybe: Risk Management

Director Tim Maybee, who chaired the Security Committee for several years before the board's January 2025 reorganization, began by stressing that his concerns were not directed at Arino or the security staff.



Security Sgt. Brandon Arino outlines proposed changes to the Security Department at the Rancho Murieta Association Board meeting on Feb. 18. File photos by Gail Bullen

He said he had "gotten [his] rear end kicked" in prior meetings on the topic and was now approaching the issue solely in his role as a board member, focused on policy, governance and risk management.

Maybee said his concerns center on what he views as a gradual shift away from a pure "observe and report" model toward an "observe, report and intervene when safe" approach. He questioned when that language was formally adopted and who determines, in real time, what qualifies as "safe."

He reminded the board that prior direction had been to avoid placing patrol officers in situations requiring split-second decisions about physical intervention, arguing that such judgments carry heightened risk for both the officers and the district.

Maybee also referenced the failed Measure R, the 2024 parcel tax proposal that would have generated additional funding for security services. He argued that its defeat signaled the community's reluctance to expand – or substantially increase the cost of – district security operations.

Maybee's central concern was liability. He argued that authorizing batons, OC spray, handcuffs and potentially Tasers without guaranteed, recurring funding for comprehensive training creates significant exposure for the district.

He described the state-required guard-card training as the "bare minimum," saying it does not adequately prepare officers for high-crisis situations in which a baton or Taser might be deployed.

If an incident were to result in a lawsuit or deposition, he warned, attorneys would closely examine training hours, documentation and whether policies align with actual practice. Expanding tools and intervention authority without corresponding, ongoing budget commitments for training, he said, would leave the district in what he characterized as a "risk management deficit," even a "risk management crisis."



Director Tim Maybee expresses concern about increasing the district's liability.

Maybee returned to the issue of liability during director comments at the end of the meeting. He noted that patrol officers are still formally classified as Community Service Officers, yet they are carrying defensive tools not reflected in that job description. That disconnect between classification and actual duties, he said, increases the district's legal exposure.

Responses

Arino responded to the earlier discussion about potentially eliminating defensive tools for patrol officers.

"So from what it sounds like from the risk management aspect of it ... is it asked that we're further disarming our security personnel, taking away batons, taking away pepper spray, taking away handcuffs to where they just wear a leather belt to work? Is that what we're aiming for?" he said.

The "leather belt" remark underscored his view that officers need



Director Linda Butler explains why the patrol officer job description should be revised.

defensive options if they are expected to respond meaningfully to real-world incidents.

Arino also disputed the notion that training was absent, noting that officers annually train and recertify in batons, pepper spray and handcuffs as part of their guard-card requirements, with the district reimbursing them.

Butler later acknowledged that there is currently no dedicated line item in the operating budget for expanded security training. She said training – along with proposed gate and radio upgrades – has been placed on the 2026-27 capital improvement list and will be considered as part of the upcoming budget process.

District counsel Patrick Enright added that the security union has not yet responded to the proposed revisions to the job descriptions, providing another reason to postpone action.

After nearly an hour of discussion, the board agreed to revisit the matter

at its March meeting.

Security Report

In his monthly report, Arino said all patrol positions are currently filled, with a total of 15 employees in the department: seven full-time gate officers, four part-time gate officers and four full-time patrol officers. Of those, five remain on probation. He said recent hires have completed their required training.

Butler noted that security staffing levels only allow patrol and gate coverage "24/7/365" if no one calls in sick or takes vacation. In reality, she said, any absence immediately creates gaps in patrol coverage, even though many residents continue to assume the community has uninterrupted, full-time security presence.

Arino also reported that the department recently used the district's alert system to notify residents of a water main break on Pescado Circle. Officers also responded to several significant incidents, including a suspected stroke at the post office, a welfare check in which a resident was found deceased, and a case involving a lost elderly resident.

Arino said he is working with Rancho Murieta Association Compliance to develop a "Bring Me Home Safe" registry designed to help first responders quickly identify and assist vulnerable residents who may wander.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

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.

Feb. 9

5:36 p.m., RMA Violation-Storing Vehicles: Officer 'observed a vehicle parked at Gazebo Park exceeding the 72-hour limit. The vehicle was previously marked on Feb. 5. Citation issued.

Feb. 11

6:50 p.m., Escort: While conducting a routine patrol near St. Vincent Church, Officer Perepelka observed a gray Toyota Camry driving behind the church via the rear alley. Contact was made with the driver, identified as a Spark Delivery Services employee. Due to a language barrier and navigation confusion, the driver became disoriented. The driver was directed back to the main roadway and advised to obey posted traffic signage. The driver then proceeded toward the intended delivery location. Area cleared.

Feb. 14

1:13 a.m., Trespassing: Officer Anderson observed vehicles at the Lake Calero entrance after hours. All subjects and vehicles departed upon officer arrival. Area cleared. ★

Feb. 15

9:33 p.m., While conducting a patrol on Cantova Way, Officer Perepelka observed Sacramento County Sheriff's deputies conducting a vehicle stop involving a white Toyota Tundra. The driver was detained and placed into a Sheriff's vehicle. The driver was identified as a resident of Lago Drive. RMCSO Security contacted SSD and advised of a prior complaint received at approximately 11 a.m. regarding the same subject and vehicle. SSD acknowledged prior contacts involving the subject. No further information was provided by SSD. Area cleared.

Feb. 16

8:32 p.m., Vehicle Accident: Security responded to a reported solo vehicle collision at Lago Drive and 2 Park. A vehicle was located after striking a light pole, causing visible damage and displacement. Sacramento County Sheriff's deputies were on scene and advised the driver was not under the influence.

The driver, of Lago Drive, reported no injuries. The driver stated he fell asleep while driving, resulting in loss of control and collision with the light pole. CHP was notified but did not respond. The vehicle was later recovered by the owner. No electrical hazards were observed. Insurance information was obtained. RMA was notified for light pole inspection. Area cleared. ★

Hampton to Oversee Rancho Murieta as East Division Commander

Continued from page 1

community he will be serving.

"The City of Rancho Cordova is pleased to welcome Shaun Hampton as our new chief of Police," said City Manager Micah Runner. "His previous experience at RCMP, extensive law enforcement background and commitment to the City of Rancho Cordova make him an outstanding choice to serve our community."

Hampton's decades of law enforcement service are grounded in professionalism, accountability, operational excellence and fairness, with a strong emphasis on community partnerships. He is a committed advocate for training and professional development and served as an instructor in firearms, patrol tactics and advanced officer training, as well as a mentor to other law enforcement

professionals. Hampton earned a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Management from Union Institute and University.

"I am honored to once again be serving the Rancho Cordova community and to continue fostering community relationships and partnerships to keep all residents safe," Hampton said.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

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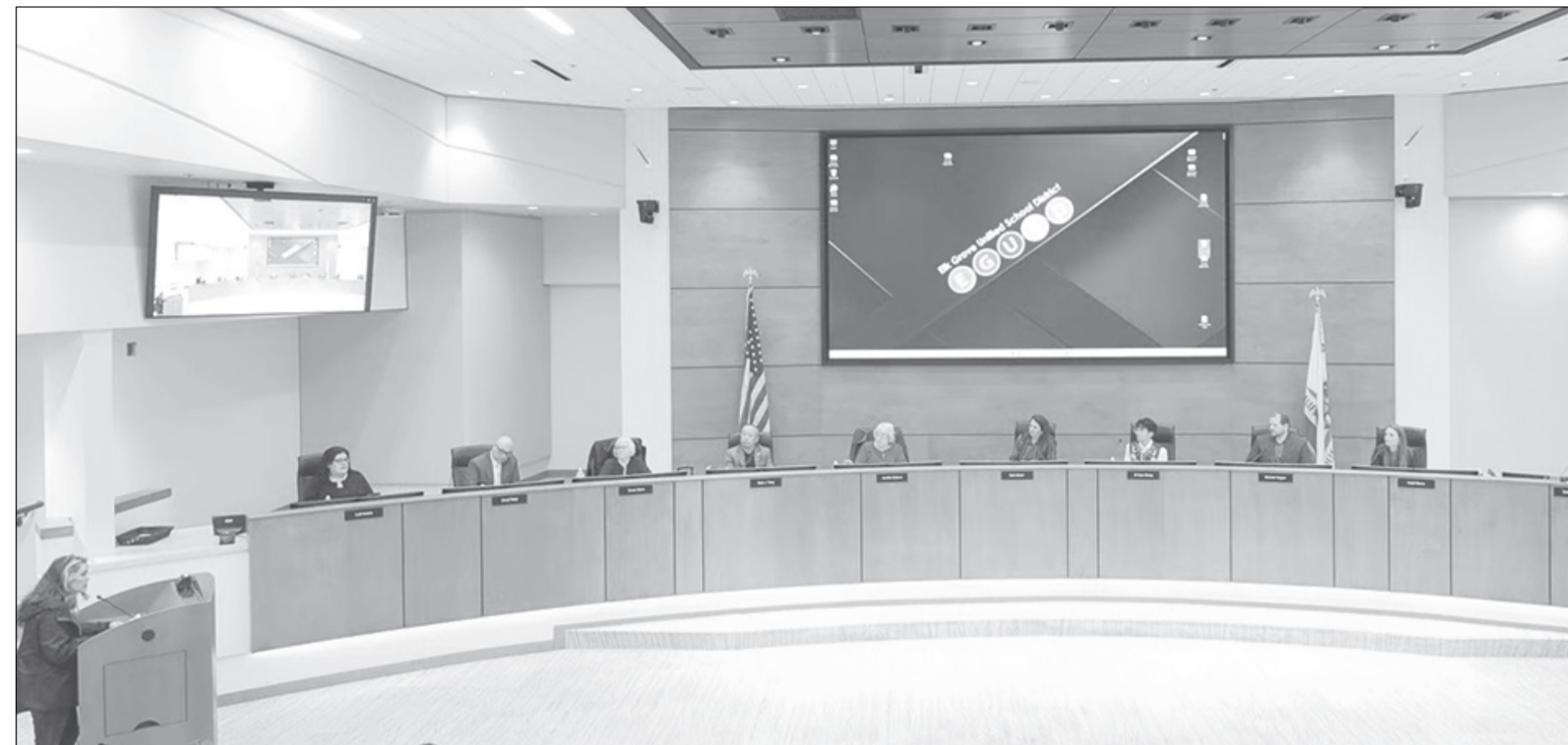
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Elk Grove Unified Board Raises Trustee Pay, Approves Layoffs



Elk Grove Unified School District employee Jennifer Hart speaks during public comment at the Feb. 17 meeting in opposition of the proposed board member pay increase allowed under new state law Assembly Bill 1390. Photos courtesy of Elk Grove Unified School District

By Idaly Valencia

ELK GROVE, CA (MPG) - The Elk Grove Unified School District board voted to sharply increase trustee pay during its Feb. 17 meeting, the same night it approved layoffs and reassignments affecting dozens of classified positions, decisions that drew criticism from community members during public comment.

Trustee Pay

Trustees approved raising the monthly board pay from \$750 to \$3,000, a change permitted under Assembly Bill 1390, which allows school board members to receive compensation ranging from \$600 to \$4,500 per month based on a district's average daily attendance from the prior school year. For Elk Grove Unified School District, the current maximum is \$3,000 per month, with the potential to increase to \$4,500 if daily attendance rises during the 2025-26 school year. The previous stipend rate had remained unchanged since 1991.

Layoffs

The vote to increase trustee pay occurred during the same meeting in which the board approved staffing reductions attributed to what the district described as "reduction or discontinuance in particular kinds of services" and "lack of work and/or lack of funds."

At the start of the meeting, board president Beth Albani announced actions taken in closed session approving a resolution to release or reassign several administrative positions for the 2026-27 school year, which begins in July. Those positions include five vice principals, an AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination, college readiness program) coordinator and a program specialist in education equity.

Additional staffing changes were approved unanimously through the consent calendar, meaning the items were approved



"I wonder then if this board is aware that your \$3,000 a month exceeds what a full-time paraeducator with 11 years of experience working in EGUSD takes home by roughly \$1,000 a month," said Jennifer Hart, who identified herself as an Elk Grove Unified School District employee, during public comment at the Feb. 17 meeting.

by a single motion without public discussion. Those actions included the removal or reduction of several classified positions, including admissions representatives and technicians, computer training and support specialists, college and career counseling technicians, custodians, family school community liaisons, health assistants in special education, job developers, library technicians, paraeducators, prekindergarten instructors, program assistants and educators, project implementors, substance abuse prevention educators, school office assistants, staff services technicians and a student store technician.

While the district did not specify the exact number of employees affected, the reductions were measured as a total decrease of 60,038 full-time equivalent hours. Of that amount, 18,682 hours are tied to positions that are currently vacant. The changes will apply across the district's 68 schools serving communities throughout Sacramento County, including Elk Grove, Florin, Rancho Murieta, Vineyard, Wilton, Rancho Cordova and Sacramento.

The board also approved additional reductions or eliminations of classified and non-management

positions tied to program changes involving English as a second language, computer basics, parent education high school diploma and high school equivalency, medical assistant and a resource teacher program coordinator.

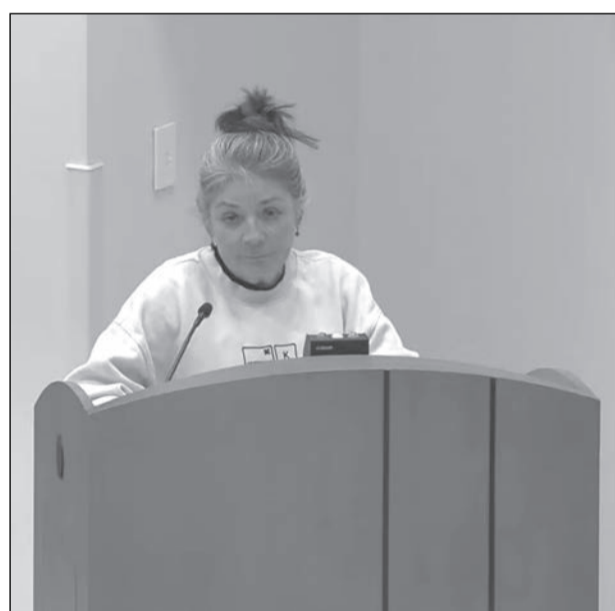
Public Comment

During public comment, district employee Jennifer Hart addressed the board on its pay increase, describing it as the "quadrupling" of trustee compensation. Hart said she had emailed trustees ahead of the meeting and received responses noting childcare, gas expenses and the time commitment required to serve.

While Hart said she supported making board service financially accessible, she argued the increase was unfair when compared with other district employees who work directly with students daily.

"I wonder then if this board is aware that your \$3,000 a month exceeds what a full-time paraeducator with 11 years of experience working in EGUSD takes home by roughly \$1,000 a month," Hart said.

"It is no wonder that we cannot keep these jobs filled when district wages for these positions are so far below what you have deemed appropriate for public service," she added.



Rocio Galvan, president of the California School Employees Association Elk Grove chapter, opposed the Elk Grove Unified School District board of trustees' pay increase at its Feb. 17 meeting, noting the district's more than \$35 million deficit and a shift in public expectations.

California School Employees Association Elk Grove chapter president Rocio Galvan, who said she represents more than 800 district employees, also spoke against the pay increase. She highlighted the district's more than \$35 million deficit and warned that the decision could shift public expectations of the board.

"Just because you can do something does not mean you should," Galvan said. "The respect that this community has for you is rooted in the fact that you do this for less, not more."

"If you approve a 400% raise, you fundamentally alter that contract between you and the public; you shift this role from civic stewardship to paid politician," Galvan said. "When you increase the pay, you drastically increase expectations."

After public comment, Superintendent David Reilly presented the proposed revisions to the trustee compensation consistent with AB 1390, noting the fiscal impact on the district would result in a net increase of approximately \$189,000. Based on discussion from the Feb. 3 meeting, the board added language stating it will consider an increase of up to 5% every two years rather than annually.

Under the revisions, student board members would

receive up to \$400 per month.

Board Vote

Before the final vote, Albani said she accepted the will of the board regarding the \$3,000 stipend but said Galvan raised "excellent points" that should be considered, including how increased compensation could change public perception of the board.

The board ultimately voted 6-1 to approve the stipend increase, with Albani voting no.

Following the vote, Trustee Sean J. Yang asked Albani whether she would accept the increased payment. Albani said she would but plans to return a portion to the district to cover health care debt and donate money to charitable efforts.

"I just want to clarify, that's all," Yang said.

Trustees also approved increasing the maximum number of compensated missed meetings from two to three, including unavoidable work conflicts. Albani, Trustee Delia Baulwin and Trustee Heidi Moore voted against the measure.

Future Increases

The board further approved language allowing the stipend to increase to \$4,500 a month beginning in July if the district's

average daily attendance exceeds 60,000 during the current school year. Albani proposed an alternative tiered structure that would increase the stipend by \$500 at attendance thresholds of 60,001, 65,001 and 70,001.

Trustee Susan Davis questioned Albani whether the pay should decrease if attendance later declines, noting the law accounts for changes in daily attendance.

Albani responded, saying, "This is a stipend, it's not a salary; no one in education gets paid enough for the job they do."

Davis disagreed, describing board service as a full-time commitment that has hurt her financially. Davis also said she has encountered potential candidates who are unwilling to run because it wouldn't be possible to maintain a full-time job while serving on the board.

"I'm not doing this for my finances. I'm doing this for the future of our board; that all we're going to have on this board is people who are either financially privileged or have the ability and the freedom to do this without pay," Davis said, a sentiment Yang echoed.

Trustee Michael Vargas acknowledged public concerns about increased expectations tied to higher compensation, saying trustees must demonstrate the value of that investment.

"You look at the approximate cost; that's a salary plus benefits. That is that one AVID coordinator that we were not able to keep. There's a real cost here," Vargas said. "We accept that that is our responsibility moving forward."

Albani's proposed amendment failed to win majority support, with only Moore voting in favor.

The board ultimately approved the original proposal by a 5-2 vote, allowing trustees' pay to rise to a maximum of \$4,500 per month if daily attendance increases.

This story is at therivervalleytimes.com and on Facebook. ★

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Wilton Bingo Set for March 7

The next bingo will be on Saturday, March 7 in the Wilton Community Center, 9717 Colony Road at Dillard Road, Wilton. Doors open at 5 p.m. with food available for sale and bingo starts at 6 p.m. All proceeds go to two nonprofits: the local Park Council and the Wilton History Group.

and up) and \$15 per person (ages 12 and under). Dinner tickets can be purchased at the clubhouse Mondays, Thursday and Fridays from 5-9 p.m. or shop via club's web page altamesagunclub.com.

For more information on tickets, call 916-716-7329 or 916-291-3173. The Alta Mesa Gun Club is at 10100 Reigl Road, Wilton.

95683, or dropped off at 14963 Reynosa Drive.

Attendees are encouraged to bring optional donations of new, non-perishable food or personal care items for the Sacramento Wellspring Women's Center, which provides meals, support services and a safe gathering place for vulnerable women and children. A preferred donation list includes pantry staples, hygiene items, baby supplies and select wellness and art materials.

For more information, contact Barbara Armstrong at 916-541-1884.

Little League Opening Day Set for March 7

Cosumnes River Little League will celebrate Opening Day on March 7, beginning with a parade featuring decorated team floats.

The parade steps off at 9 a.m. on Murieta Parkway and will travel along Guadalupe Drive, Pera Drive and Escuela Drive before ending at Stonehouse Park. Opening ceremonies begin at 10 a.m.

A CRLI-sponsored hot dog lunch, served by the Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta, will follow.

The first games are scheduled to begin at 11:30 a.m. ★

VFW Slates Fishing and Camping Swap Meet March 14

The Rancho Murieta Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars will host a free Fishing and Camping Swap Meet on Saturday, March 14 at the RMA Building. Due to limited space, sellers must sign up in advance on sheets available at the RMA Building. Seller setup runs from 9 to 10 a.m., and the swap meet is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Alta Mesa Gun Club Corned Beef and Cabbage March 14

The Alta Mesa Gun Club of Wilton will be celebrating St. Patrick's Day by hosting its annual Corned Beef and Cabbage dinner on Saturday, March 14. Social hour begins at 5 p.m., followed by the 6 p.m. dinner. Tickets are \$35 per person (ages 13

Spring Into Giving Bingo Set for March 25

The Rancho Murieta Women's Club will host its second annual Spring Into Giving Bingo on Wednesday, March 25 at the Rancho Murieta Country Club, combining bingo, lunch and charitable giving in support of the Sacramento Wellspring Women's Center. The menu includes Caesar salad, breadsticks, meat or vegetarian gluten-free lasagna, and a vanilla ice cream sundae for dessert. Spring-themed bingo prizes will be awarded during the event.

The cost is \$35 for club members and \$40 for non-members. Reservations are required and must be submitted by 5 p.m. Friday, March 13. Payments may be mailed to the Rancho Murieta Women's Club at P.O. Box 527, Rancho Murieta CA

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ETC Celebrates 25 Years with Summer Concert Season

ETC News Release

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Entertainment, Theatre & Culture for Rancho Murieta is celebrating a milestone anniversary with a vibrant concert season created to bring neighbors together for another summer of music under the stars. Join ETC in commemorating 25 years in Rancho Murieta with special surprises and unforgettable moments throughout the season.



Hip Service provides the party music during Summerfest's end-of-summer bash at Stonehouse Park on Sept. 10, 2021. The high-energy band is scheduled to return to Rancho Murieta as part of ETC's 2026 concert lineup. File photo by Gail Bullen

Kick-off May 17
The first event will be the Kick-off on Sunday, May 17 from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Rancho Murieta Country Club. All community members are invited to this free event.

The afternoon celebration will offer a festive preview of the season ahead, along with the chance to buy memberships and discounted tickets.

Following the kickoff, ETC's summer concert series unfolds in chronological order:

June 20 – The Blockbusters

Get ready for a throw-back party straight from the '90s. Blockbusters is a high-energy band made up of four former video store employees on a mission to celebrate everything we loved about the 1990s and early 2000s.

Blending rock, pop, dance, hip-hop, grunge and beyond, they deliver a nonstop, sing-along, dance-along experience

packed with the era's biggest hits. Dressed in their iconic video store uniforms and fueled by nostalgia, Blockbusters brings a fun, crowd-pleasing show where the best hits are always in stock: perfect for a feel-good summer night the whole family can enjoy

July 11 – Billy Joel & Elton John – Face to Face

Experience an electrifying night of musical nostalgia with the ultimate Billy Joel & Elton John celebration. Featuring Billy Nation and Kenny Metcalf, this dazzling dual tribute brings two legendary piano icons together on one stage for an unforgettable evening of sing-along classics.

Audiences will be transported back to the '70s and '80s with beloved hits like

“Piano Man,” “Just the Way You Are,” “Rocket Man” and “Your Song,” performed with signature grand pianos, powerhouse vocals and a dynamic live band.

From soulful ballads to high-octane rockers, this face-to-face showdown captures the heart, humor and showmanship of two of the greatest piano men in music history: a crowd-pleasing summer concert built on timeless hits everyone knows and loves

Aug. 1 – The Titans of Rock

Get ready for a classic rock celebration like no other. Hailing from Southern California, Titans of Rock is a supergroup of world-class musicians who have shared the stage with rock royalty and bring the

full arena-level classic rock experience to every show.

They deliver the greatest hits from the '60s through the 2000s – from Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones to Pearl Jam and U2 – with energy, authenticity and passion that gets everyone singing and dancing under the summer sky.

Whether you're a lifelong rock fan or just love a great live performance, Titans of Rock turns a Rancho Murieta summer night into an unforgettable rock 'n' roll party.

Aug. 22 – Hip Service

Get ready to dance the night away with Sacramento's own Hip Service.

With 18 world-class performers on stage, this nationally recognized, award-winning

powerhouse brings a feel-good, sing-along, dance-along celebration under the summer sky. From Motown through the '70s, '80s, '90s, 2000s and today's biggest hits, Hip Service delivers electrifying horns, powerhouse vocals, dynamic dancers and a rock-solid rhythm section that keeps every generation moving.

Hip Service has thrilled audiences coast to coast and shared stages with iconic names while making every moment feel like a party. It's a joyful, multi-generational show that turns a Rancho Murieta summer night into something truly unforgettable.

Sept. 5 – Rhinestone Rodeo

Pop or country? Why not both? Break out your

boots and cowboy hats – but don't forget your rhinestones – because Rhinestone Rodeo brings sparkle, personality and big-stage fun to every performance.

This electrifying band from Utah blends today's biggest pop hits with high-octane country swagger into a feel-good, sing-along, dance-along celebration under the summer sky.

Winners of two Utah Best of State Awards for Party/Cover Band and Specialty Act, they deliver powerhouse vocals, tight musicianship and electric energy that makes a Rancho Murieta summer night unforgettable for the whole family.

For more information, visit etc-rm.org or email asketcinfo@gmail.com. ★

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