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Return to Rancho
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RIVER VALLEY TIMES

42ND YEAR • ISSUE 6

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MARCH 27, 2026

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**AUDITS, PLANNING
ARE TOPICS AT CSD
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**IN GOVERNOR'S RACE,
CANDIDATES, VOTERS
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Little League Celebrates 35 Years with Festive Opening Day



Cosumnes River Little League kicks off its 35th season with an opening day parade from Murieta Parkway to Stonehouse Park on March 7. River Wiley, left, and Will Nauman carry the banner at the front of the parade.

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Beneath clear blue skies and warm spring sunshine, Cosumnes River Little League kicked off its 35th season March 7 with a spirited opening day celebration at Stonehouse Park.

The annual tradition began with a parade of 31 teams traveling along Murieta Parkway to the park, led by a Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District engine. Players rode in creatively decorated chariots, tossing candy to spectators who lined the route, before arriving to cheering crowds and a festive balloon tunnel

entrance onto the main field. League President Dan Reid said afterward that the near-perfect weather made for an ideal start to a milestone season. "The weather for opening day was perfect," Reid said. "We couldn't have asked for a better way to kick

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CSD Proposes 31% Rate Increase for 2026-27

Average Monthly Customer Bill					
Residential Metered Lot (Inside the gates)		Current Monthly Rates	Proposed Monthly Rates	\$	%
		July 1, 2025	July 1, 2026	Change	Change
Water	Average Usage in CF	1,815	1,707		
Residential Base (excluding reserves)		\$ 54.09	\$ 85.46	\$ 31.37	58.0%
Reserve Contribution		16.00	21.00	5.00	31.3%
Water Base Charge		70.09	106.46	36.37	51.9%
Water Usage (per 100 cubic foot)	\$2.71 → \$3.93	49.19	67.08	17.89	45.0%
Total Water		119.28	173.54	54.26	45.5%
WTP Debt Service Charge		6.00	-	(6.00)	
Wastewater					
Residential Base (excluding reserves)		61.61	97.34	35.73	58.0%
Reserve Contribution		16.00	21.00	5.00	31.3%
Wastewater Base Charge		77.61	118.34	40.73	52.5%
Solid Waste (avg. 65 Gallon Container)		43.87	45.89	2.02	4.60%
Solid Waste Administrative Fee		3.00	3.14	0.14	4.60%
District Administrative Fee		3.00	3.14	0.14	4.60%
Security Tax		33.48	34.15	0.67	2.00%
Drainage Tax		5.87	5.99	0.12	2.00%
Total RMCSB Bill		\$ 292.11	\$ 384.18	\$ 92.07	31.52%

The actual rate increases may be less than but in no case more than the proposed rates above.

A sample bill shows that Rancho Murieta Community Services District rates could increase by about 31%. The proposed budget was discussed at the March 18 board meeting. Courtesy photo

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Average residential utility bills behind the gates in Rancho Murieta –covering water, wastewater, drainage, solid waste and patrol services – could jump by about 31.5%, or roughly \$92 per month, under a preliminary Rancho Murieta Community

Services District budget proposal. Speaking at the March 18 board meeting, Finance and Administration Director Cecilia Min said the average residential bill would increase from \$292.11 to \$384.18 under the proposed 2026-27 budget. The district currently serves about 2,917 service connections in Rancho Murieta, though rates vary by property type. The proposed increase is driven

largely by rising operating and administrative costs – projected to increase by about \$2.55 million next year – and by the district's efforts to rebuild reserves, rather than by any specific new development project. At the end of her presentation, the board voted unanimously to mail the required Proposition 218 notice to district customers. The

Continued on page 2

Association Board Advances GM Search



Rod Hart, who is retiring May 1 after 45 years with the Rancho Murieta Association, listens during a recent board meeting.

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

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The search for a new general manager, revising the fine schedule to comply with a new law, approving the 2025 financial statements and purchasing new maintenance equipment were primary topics when the Rancho Murieta Association Board of Directors met on March 17.

GM Search

The general manager search, initiated several months ago to replace Rod Hart, has been a focused, professional effort to find a strong successor, while acknowledging he cannot truly be replaced. Hart retires May 1 after 45 years with the association.

Director Scott Adams, serving as chair of the GM Search Committee with Director Ernie Cowles as co-chair, said the position was advertised through the Community Associations Institute (CAI) and the California Association of Community Managers (CACM) for about five weeks. They received 12 resumes, and Adams noted that, unlike a prior search, none of the applicants were unqualified.

Adams and Cowles reviewed all applications and narrowed the pool to three finalists, who were interviewed by the board on March 11 and 12. Adams said all three were strong candidates and that the board is now selecting the final hire.

Cowles called the search "a steep hill to climb," emphasizing that Hart cannot truly be replaced. Adams agreed, praising Hart's long-term impact. The committee was then deactivated.

Adams reminded everyone that Hart will remain in his role until May 1 and urged community members to take the opportunity to stop by, see him and thank him personally before his last day.

Continued on page 7

CSD Proposes 31% Rate Increase for 2026-27

Continued from page 1

notice – which must be mailed by March 31 – informs property owners of the proposed increase and establishes the maximum rates the board could adopt. After further analysis and public input, the board may adopt lower rates before finalizing the budget in June.

Before the board voted, two audience members urged the board to take a middle-ground approach on the rate increase. See the separate story in this issue.

Budgeting Method

Min spent about 1½ hours using a succession of slides and staff input to explain how she built the budget to cover an expected \$2.5 million increase in costs in the upcoming year.

She told the board she abandoned the old budgeting method because the underlying accounting data were “full of errors and incomplete”: invoices were booked in the wrong periods, some lacked invoice dates and coding was inconsistent. Under those conditions, she said, she couldn’t responsibly project next year’s costs from last year’s numbers.

As a result, she “took a big U-turn” and adopted zero-based budgeting. She pulled 18 months of invoices, sat down with department heads and asked for each item: Do we still need this? How much do we need? From those answers, they built the new budget from the ground up rather than relying on last year’s flawed history.

Market Trends

Next, Min turned to



Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder displays the “stop sign” graphic that will appear in the upcoming Proposition 218 notice, emphasizing that the proposed rates are a ceiling and may be reduced before the final budget is adopted in June. Photo by Gail Bullen

market trends: the external forces driving costs. She cited a Consumer Price Index of about 2.8% for 2026 and generally assumed a 3% increase unless contracts dictated otherwise.

She highlighted health care as a major driver: CalPERS data showed an 8.26% premium increase for 2026, and over the last five years, health insurance had risen 8-10% annually, with Kaiser increasing 15.5% in 2023.

She also researched chemical prices, citing sector-wide data showing double-digit increases: from about 30% to more than 60% for some disinfectants, pH adjusters and corrosion control chemicals. According to the district’s own records, chemical expenses were already running about 82% of their annual budget line.

Min also noted that many Northern California water systems are adopting annual rate increases

of roughly 6.7% to 9.7% to keep up with similar pressures.

Past Rates

Min then made the case that past district rate increases have not kept pace with these realities. She showed a graphic indicating that the average residential water bill rose from about \$209 per month in 2021 to about \$283 in 2025, an increase of roughly \$73, or about 35%, over five years.

“Across the water utility sector, costs have been rising for several years, yet typical rate increases have been only \$20 to \$30 per month,” Min said. “Those increases don’t even cover health plan premiums alone. ... So if we continue to do a 3.5% increase, we’re never going to balance our budgets.”

Min also presented audited results for the year ended June 30, 2022, showing a \$2.2 million loss. About \$1.5 million of

that was depreciation, but even after removing depreciation, the district still had roughly a \$500,000 operating loss. There was no rate increase that year because of protests.

She also referenced a 2023 grand jury report that examined rate history from 2013-14 through 2021-22. The report found average annual increases of only 2.6%, with a compounded increase of 22.85% over eight years, and concluded the district’s rate increases had been insufficient.

Min stressed that this was an external finding, not her own opinion, and said it confirmed her conclusion that the district had been undercharging for its services for many years.

Budget Goals

Min outlined several goals for the 2026-27 budget, saying it is intended not just to fund another year of operations but to fix structural problems in how the district manages its

finances and infrastructure.

She said the budget aims to include realistic funding for emergency repairs so they are not repeatedly paid out of reserves, rebuild operating reserves toward a safer six-month level, strengthen accounting systems and complete overdue audits, and shift the district toward planned, long-range maintenance and capital replacement through a 10-year plan instead of reacting to failures.

Proposed Budget

With that context, she presented her proposed budget for fiscal year 2026-27. In total, she projected about \$12 million in operating revenue against roughly \$8.6 million in operating expenses and \$4.2 million in general and administrative costs, for total expenses of about \$12.8 million. That leaves a projected operating loss of about \$515,000 before property taxes.

Min said property tax income will need to be used to close that gap and end with a modest net positive, though ideally, those funds would be reserved for building reserves and supporting long-term needs.

She then detailed increased costs across operations and administration. On the operations side, increases include higher chemical costs, additional lab testing, rental equipment for emergency repairs, and expanded funding for water main, valve, hydrant and drainage repairs to address aging infrastructure. She also included funding for employee training so staff can operate

specialized equipment and respond more quickly to issues such as sewer spills.

On the administrative side, increases include election costs, strategic planning, communications, document management, a cloud-based accounting system, recruitment, insurance, legal costs, IT services, and rising health care and benefit costs.

Min also proposed increasing the monthly reserve contribution for water and wastewater from \$16 to \$21 per customer – a \$5 increase – to help rebuild reserves.

She acknowledged the size of the increase but said it reflects the true cost of operating the system under current market conditions, correcting for years of insufficient rates documented by the grand jury and confirmed by audited losses.

Following her presentation, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder asked the board to authorize mailing the Proposition 218 notices with the proposed rates, noting the rates cannot go up but can go down. The board voted 4-0 to proceed. Director Bill Gere did not attend the meeting.

Director Randy Jenco made a point of separating his vote on the notice from his position on the eventual budget. He said he would support sending out the Prop 218 notice, but warned, “I am not going to vote for a budget that shows security in black ... has to take care of itself. And if we have less security, that’s the way it’s got to be, in my mind.”

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



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Senior Banners Return to Rancho Murieta Parkways



Rancho Murieta Association maintenance employee Alex Mescher moves his bucket after attaching two senior banners to a light standard along Murieta Parkway on March 12.

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Banners honoring Rancho Murieta's graduating high school seniors are once again lining Murieta Parkway North and South, transforming the community's main thoroughfares into a rolling celebration of local students.

Installed in mid-March by Rancho Murieta Association maintenance crews, this year's display features approximately 63 seniors representing a wide range of schools and educational paths.

Each banner includes a portrait of the graduate along with their name and

school, creating a highly visible tribute that has become a cherished community tradition.

Tradition Growing From Pandemic

What began in 2020 as a way to recognize seniors whose graduations were disrupted by COVID-19 has evolved into an annual celebration.

In that first year, 66 banners were funded by community groups to honor students who were missing milestone events. By 2022, the effort had shifted to a parent-driven model, with families funding banners while volunteers coordinated the program.

Today, the banners are no longer a substitute for

lost ceremonies; they are an added layer of recognition that many families now look forward to each spring.

Parents Keep Program Going

This year's program was organized by senior moms Marissa Maranise and Keri Hanson, whose daughters have grown up together in the community.

"We worked amazingly together," Maranise said, noting the pair began planning shortly after the school year started to ensure an earlier installation.

Families funded the banners, which cost just under \$100 each. Tayco Graphics again produced the banners, with Maranise



Daniel Esquivel directs traffic while a co-worker installs senior banners from the association's new aerial lift along Murieta Parkway.

praising the company's responsiveness and quality.

"We were able to provide everything needed to create these beautiful banners," she said.

To streamline the process, Hanson created an online form that allowed families to upload photos and information in one place, helping organizers to manage logistics and sort banners geographically.

Representing Many Schools

While Pleasant Grove High School continues to account for the largest share of students, this year's seniors attend a broad mix of schools, including Bradshaw Christian, Elk Grove, Ponderosa, Argonaut, Jesuit, Christian Brothers, St. Francis and Folsom High Schools, as well as Destiny Christian Academy.

Charter and independent study programs such as Visions In Education and South Sutter Charter School are also represented, reflecting the increasingly diverse

educational paths of local students.

From North to South

Organizers made a concerted effort to place banners on the side of the community where each student lives, asking families to designate north or south during the ordering process.

While placement is not guaranteed, the system helps to create a sense of neighborhood connection as residents spot familiar faces along their daily routes.

The banners are mounted on light standards along both Murieta Parkway North and South and are expected to remain up until mid-May, when they are typically replaced by the community's Hometown Heroes veteran banners.

Source of Pride

For Maranise, the banners represent more than recognition: They capture years of shared history in a close-knit community.

"I've lived in RM South for almost 24 years. The banners represent my

kids, my kids' friends, my friends' kids," she said. "It sparks memories."

She added that the display offers a welcome sense of positivity.

"There are lots of negatives in this world ... but these banners bring happiness to me," she said.

As residents drive the parkways, the banners serve as a reminder of both individual achievement and collective pride.

"I'm so proud of our kids," Maranise said. "I love that we can celebrate them in this way."

Looking Ahead

With strong participation and early planning helping to extend the display into March, organizers say they hope to continue refining the program in future years.

Maranise has already committed to helping coordinate again next year: a sign that what began as a pandemic response has firmly taken root as a Rancho Murieta tradition.

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

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MEMORIAL

RICHARD JOHN VALLADAO • 08/29/1933 - 03/04/2026

Richard John Valladao, a beloved 42-year resident of Rancho Murieta, passed away peacefully March 4th at the age of 92. He was blessed with a devoted 67-year marriage to Carolyn and raised three sons. He lived a life defined by faith, family, community service and had a lifelong passion for aviation.



as they explored the world. The Rancho Murieta Airport became a second home to Dick, where he spent countless hours "down at the hangar," flying and restoring aircraft. Over the years, he completed seven aircraft restorations and several other creative projects, including converting a horse-drawn carriage into an electric vehicle. Three of his "projects" are displayed in museums, including a World War II L-2M scout plane that he personally flew into Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Today, it hangs in the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. Dick and his fellow aviation enthusiasts shared their love of flight with the community by hosting air shows, organizing junior aviator programs and offering free airplane rides to children.

Born on August 29, 1933, in Half Moon Bay, California, to Jess and Genevieve Valladao, Richard (Dick) grew up on the family ranch at the intersection of Highway 92 & Skyline Boulevard. He shared his childhood with his twin brother Jerome, older brother Patrick, and sisters Genevieve and Mary. Life on the ranch during the 1930s and 1940s demanded hard work from everyone, instilling in him a lifelong appreciation for family and responsibility. From working on the ranch equipment Dick discovered his remarkable ability to rebuild machinery, a gift he would rely on throughout his life in both business and personal projects.

Crown's San Francisco headquarters, Dick transferred to St. Francisville, Louisiana, to help manage a mill. He and Carolyn quickly embraced Southern hospitality, forming lifelong friendships filled with fish fries, shrimp boils and Saturday night dances.

Determined to own his own business before turning 40, Dick took a bold leap of faith and started his own paper processing company serving mills throughout the South. Drawing on his mechanical expertise, he purchased and rebuilt a paper winder he acquired for "pennies on the dollar." Within a few years, he merged his company with another in Monroe, Louisiana, forming Mill Inventory Supply Company (MISCO), eventually growing it into one of the largest paper processing companies in the region, with locations in Monroe, Atlanta, Greenville, and Scranton.

Dick attended Half Moon Bay High School and then earned his pilot's license while at San Mateo Junior College. He later attended the University of Denver, where he studied business and, more importantly, met the love of his life, Carolyn Staudt. After graduation, he was drafted into the US Army. He and Carol married and were stationed at Fort Ord on the Monterey Peninsula, where their first son, Michael, was born. Following his military service, Dick began working for Crown Zellerbach Paper Company and they welcomed two more sons, Greg and John. After several years at

In the early 1980s, Dick sold the company and relocated to Rancho Murieta, where he and Carol built their dream home overlooking the golf course. The next four decades were filled with hospitality, adventure, and continued business pursuits. They traveled extensively, enjoying more than 40 cruises

With faith being central to Dick's life, he played an instrumental role in founding two Catholic mission churches: St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Swartz, Louisiana, and St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Rancho Murieta, California. His commitment to service left a lasting impact on both communities. Dick is survived by his sons: Michael Valladao (Sue) of San Jose, California; Greg Valladao (Kathy) of Phoenix, Arizona; and John Valladao (Kristy) of La Mirada, California; as well as seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

A funeral Mass was held at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church and he was buried in Half Moon Bay in the Lady of the Pillar Catholic Cemetery. The Valladao Family expresses our thanks to all in Rancho Murieta for the support and sense of community you shared with our parents for the past 40+ years!



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Rancho Murieta Country Club

Spring Open House Social Mixer!

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Please RSVP to Chantil by Tuesday March 31st

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

VFW to Remember Vietnam Vets on March 29

The Rancho Murieta Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars will host a local observance of National Vietnam War Veterans Day on March 29 at 1 p.m. at the gazebo.

The program will feature a vocalist, a trumpet player and tributes honoring Vietnam War veterans for their service and sacrifice. Attendees are encouraged to share their own remembrances.

The VFW will host a social hour before the ceremony, and the VFW Auxiliary will provide refreshments afterward. For more information, contact Jay Solomon at 916-479-0441.

Bookmobile to Host Family Story Time April 15

The Sacramento Public Library Bookmobile visits the Rancho Murieta Village Clubhouse every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to noon. Visitors can sign up for a library card and check out books, magazines, DVDs and audiobooks. Book clubs may also request a "Book Club in a Box," which includes 10 to 12 copies of a selected title.

On April 15, the bookmobile will offer a Family Story Time from 10:30 to 11 a.m. outside the clubhouse. The program features songs, rhymes, movement activities and stories designed to support early learning skills for children up to age 5. Older siblings are welcome.

Easter Egg Hunt Slated April 4

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta will hold its annual Easter Egg Hunt and no-host Family Picnic on from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 4 at Stonehouse Park.

Children, their families and their guests are invited to attend the Easter Egg Hunt, which will feature more than 4,500 plastic eggs filled with stickers and candy. During the event, children can visit the petting farm, make Easter crafts, decorate Easter cookies and get glitter tattoos for family-friendly prices.

Tickets for activities, as well as popcorn, juice and water, will be available for purchase Saturday morning with cash or credit card. There will also be photo opportunities with the Easter Bunny.

The Fire Department will display its trucks and equipment if not on a call, and the Sheriff's Department will host an information table. The Easter Egg Hunt

will be divided by age groups on the softball field outfield with starting times of 11:20 a.m. for ages 2-4 (egg hunt with stickers), 11:40 a.m. for ages 5-7 (egg hunt with candy) and noon for ages 8-10 (egg hunt with candy).

The Murieta Dance Company will conclude the event with a performance at 12:30 p.m. The event will take place rain or shine.

The Kiwanis Club thanks the Cosumnes River Elementary K-Kids, the Girl Scouts and the Rancho Murieta Key Club for stuffing all 4,500 plastic eggs; the RM Key Club for helping with activities and refreshment sales; and Scouts from Troop 633 for helping to set up and take down the event. The club also thanks the Rancho Murieta Association for its help in making the Easter Egg Hunt a joyful occasion for local families.

For more information, contact Bronwyn Anthony at (916) 384-6444.

Scouts Slate Shredding Event

Got a pile of paperwork ready to go? Scout Troop 633 invites the community to a secure paper-shredding event from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 2 at the RMA Building parking lot. It's an easy way to declutter, safeguard your information and support local Scouts.

The suggested donation is \$15 per banker's box, reflecting increased truck and fuel costs this year.

Easter Jazz Slated at Sloughhouse Kitchen


The Rancho Murieta-based jazz combo will perform from 9:30 to noon on Easter Sunday, April 5, at Sloughhouse Kitchen at 12700 Meiss Road. Reservations are required. Visit shoughhousekitchen.com.

Wilton Animal Rescue to Host First Crab Feed April 4

Wilton Animal Rescue will host its first annual crab feed April 4 at the Galt Community Center. Sacramento County Supervisor Pat Hume will serve as special guest emcee and auctioneer.

The event will feature a fresh crab dinner, no-host bar, live and silent auctions, and raffle prizes. Proceeds will benefit dogs rescued from Wilton and surrounding areas, including Rancho Murieta.

Tickets are available at zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/wilton-animal-rescues-first-crab-feed. The rescue is located at 11380 Colony Road in Wilton. ★



Poster Contest

Celebrating Rancho Murieta ETC's 25th Year Anniversary & the USA's 250th!

1

Choose a theme:

ETC's 25 Year Anniversary

or

USA's 250th Year Anniversary

2


The artwork must be no larger than 12" x 18" and can be:

- Ink, pencil, crayon or charcoal drawing
- Painting
- Collage or 3-D media (that can be mounted on poster board)
- Photograph
- A poem or song lyrics

3

Each winning poster will get:

- 1 free concert ticket
- Poster displayed at the ETC Kick-off event at Rancho Murieta Country Club, May 17 and the June 20th concert
- Name printed in the first ETC program of the season and announced at the concert



One winner from each grade, K-12

Open to Rancho Murieta Residents Only

Contact Jane Rosetta for details: 916-996-4438 OR jrosetta63@gmail.com

DEADLINE April 30, 2026

Middle Ground Urged on Proposed 31% Rate Hike

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Two Rancho Murieta residents – one seeking volunteers for a protest and another with experience managing large corporate budgets – urged the Rancho Murieta Community Services District to find ways to lower rates next year.

Nicole Williams and Tom Shewchuk spoke during public comment at the March 18 board meeting, following Finance and Administration Director Cecilia Min's presentation of a draft 2026-27 budget. The proposal calls for a 31.5% increase in water rates: about \$92 per month for the average customer behind the gates. Min said the budget was developed to address an anticipated \$2.5 million increase in costs in the coming fiscal year.

With a March 31 deadline looming, the board ultimately voted to mail a Proposition 218 notice reflecting the full 31.5% proposed increase. In doing so, Min and the directors emphasized that the figures in the notice represent a cap under Proposition 218, meaning the district cannot later raise rates above those amounts. However, the board could still reduce the rates after further analysis and public input.

See the separate story on Min's budget presentation at the board meeting, as well as a second story on her earlier presentation to the Finance Committee on March 12.

Williams has already posted a social media request seeking volunteers to protest the proposed increase. She was one of the organizers of a successful protest against a proposed 12% rate increase in 2022-23, which led the board to adopt a rollover budget from the previous year.

Shewchuk has attended nearly all of the district's major meetings this past year and is a member of the Water Vision Working Group, which is exploring new groundwater sources. He said he previously led the corporate budgeting process for a 5,000-employee division at Intel, overseeing about \$4 billion in annual spending.

Nicole Williams

Williams, a south-side resident, began by commending Min for her work. She said what Min has inherited is "immense" and thanked her for the energy and effort she has put into digging into the numbers and working to fully understand the district's finances. Williams said she recognizes the district needs additional funding and does not dispute that, noting that infrastructure is at risk of failing to support the community, affecting everyone who lives there.

Williams then said that, for her and many others, the biggest unresolved hurdle since 2022 is credibility and trust. She explained that during the Proposition 218 protest effort, which involved a large group of volunteers, a common refrain from residents was that they did not know where their money was going and did not trust how it was being spent. She added that while residents love living in Rancho Murieta and respect and rely on the CSD, they do not trust it. In her view, that trust issue remains unresolved.

Williams then asked whether a more moderate rate increase had been fully considered. She said that since 2022, many residents have contacted her – particularly those on fixed incomes or facing childcare costs, rising grocery bills or job losses – saying an increase of this magnitude could force them to leave Rancho Murieta or is simply not affordable. Speaking on behalf of those who could not attend, she urged the board to consider a smaller ongoing increase combined with a one-time assessment.

Director Tim Maybee responded directly to Williams, pointing to the failed 2022 Proposition 218 increase, when the district sought what he described as a "simple 12%" hike. Because that increase was voted down, he said, the district is now short roughly \$2 million compared to where it would have been if the 12% had passed and compounded over time. In his view, the missing \$2 million is a major reason the current proposal is so large.

"I get you didn't trust us on 218. You didn't trust us on Measure R," he said.



Rancho Murieta resident Nicole Williams urges the Community Services District board to consider a more moderate rate increase at the March 18 meeting, following the presentation of the proposed 2026-27 budget. She is organizing a protest against the increase.



Director Tim Maybee responds to Nicole Williams' concerns.

"We are now trying to make up a gap of \$2 million on those folks who didn't want any rate increase whatsoever."

Williams pushed back on where responsibility lies, arguing that the protest stemmed from years of board and management decisions that eroded credibility.

"You are where you are at because of the individuals who have been on the board in CSD historically who dug the grave, not because of the people that sent out the letters."

Maybee said he agreed. When he joined the board, prior directors were proud that they had not raised rates for three years, a stance he challenged: "How does that make any sense?"

He added that he now "just happens to be sitting in the seat" and was "the one that got [his] ass kicked" (by the Grand Jury over the district's failure to raise rates.) "We're now paying the price for the Prop 218 rollover budget," he said.

Board President John Merchant told



Audience member Tom Shewchuk outlines potential budget reductions during public comment.

Williams he did not understand how an assessment would address her concerns.

Williams said she had not done the math.

"If there is some sort of middle-ground alternative that supports both sides and helps residents who are worried about how they will afford this on top of everything else, it's worth the discussion," she said.

Tom Shewchuk

Shewchuk also argued for a middle-ground solution. Drawing on his budgeting experience at Intel, he said Min had completed the essential first step by building the budget from the ground up. However, he said a second step should follow before locking in a 31.5% increase: requiring each department head to identify what they would cut at 5% and 10% below their requested budgets.

He said those cut lists would help the board identify which programs or projects could be deferred or trimmed, potentially bringing the increase closer to 20% to 25% rather than above 30%. He also encouraged exploring other funding sources, including grants and developer fees, and conducting a more detailed comparison with neighboring utilities whose water bills appear significantly lower.

During the budget presentation, staff explained that developer fees dedicated to infrastructure must be tracked in separate accounts and cannot be used for operating expenses, limiting their ability to offset ongoing, rate-funded costs.

In the end, the board voted 4-0 to mail the Proposition 218 notice with the full 31.5% proposal (director Bill Gere was absent). Directors emphasized again that this figure represents a ceiling, not a commitment. The district cannot later charge more than that amount, but it may adopt a lower rate after further staff analysis and public input.

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

Water Supply Options Scrutinized as CSD Board Backs Away from Well Agreement

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - As is typical at Rancho Murieta Community Services District board meetings, directors spent considerable time discussing water issues at their March 18 meeting.

The first agenda item was a report from the Water Vision Working Group, including an explanation of why free water being offered to the district by a rancher is not feasible. The second was a proposed resolution for a comprehensive well agreement, which drew immediate blowback and was ultimately withdrawn.

Water Vision Report

Director Randy Jenco chairs the board's Water Vision Working Group, which was initially tasked with assisting Water Systems Consulting with a well-siting study. The group's role later expanded to include helping with permitting required to make Lake Clementia a potable water source and exploring the commissioning of an Urban Water Management Plan, which will be required once the district reaches 3,000 water connections.

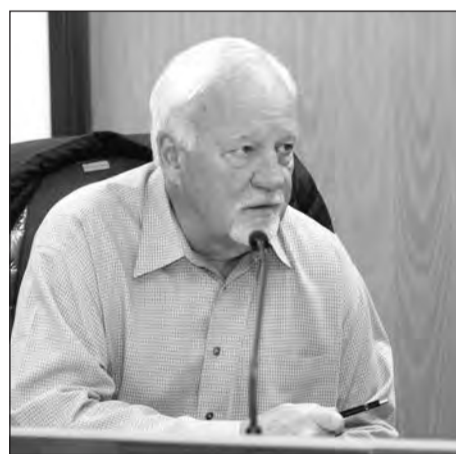
Other members include Interim Operations Manager Travis Bohannon; Rancho Murieta Association General Manager Rod Hart; resident Tom Shewchuk, representing the community; and Rancho Murieta Properties Project Manager Jeff Pearson, representing the developers.

Jenco reported that the working group met with NVT Global, which includes hydrologist Patrick Dunn, who completed a comprehensive well study for the district in 2014. The consultants are proposing additional groundwater exploration using geophysical survey methods and have identified a potential site near the Clementia Dam that could be less expensive to connect to existing pumps and lines than other locations.

Jenco said NVT will make a presentation at the next Improvements Committee meeting, which he chairs. The committee will also review the WSC draft test-drilling specifications.

Otherwise, the group's progress has largely stalled.

"A lot of what we're doing has hit a standstill because we're really at the point



Director Randy Jenco provides a Water Vision working group update at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District's March 18 meeting. File photos

where we need some good legal advice, and so the board is in the process of interviewing, and possibly choosing, an attorney to advise us on all of the water matters," Jenco said.

Free Water

As part of his report, Jenco asked Bohannon to explain what he had learned about the "free water" that Sloughhouse rancher Jay Schneider offered to the district during the Water Shortage Emergency public hearing in February.

Bohannon explained that Schneider's offer would allow the district to continue pumping from the river below the 70 cfs (cubic feet per second) cutoff to top off its reservoirs, then later replace that volume downstream using the rancher's well.

Bohannon said the proposal was not a viable option. The district's water permit explicitly prohibits diverting water when river flow is below 70 cfs (cubic feet per second), and that requirement is tied to fish protection and downstream users and is not optional.

Operationally, the district's smallest pump still moves about 2,500 gallons per minute, and staff have no data on what would happen to downstream users if pumping falls below 70 cfs. Because of these legal and operational risks, Bohannon said his recommendation to the board was not to pursue Schneider's offer as a secondary water supply or regulatory workaround.

Shewchuk also made an additional



A well agreement resolution introduced by Board President John Merchant at the meeting draws sharp criticism.

comment, noting that the working group owes the board a written summary each month, not just a verbal update. He offered to work with Jenco to ensure those written summaries are produced.

Contentious Resolution

Later in the meeting, the board discussed a resolution for a comprehensive agreement for a well that President John Merchant placed on the agenda without prior input from the directors or the working group.

Merchant said his resolution was intended to require clarification of ownership, easements and cost-sharing for any new wells before drilling. He said he wants to know "who owns this property once there's a well on it" and, if the wells only partially meet the district's needs, "Who gets it? How do they get it? When do they get it? Who pays for it? Who owns it?" before the district commits to spending potentially tens of millions of dollars.

Jenco immediately pushed back, saying Merchant was raising a "straw dog" because no spending can occur without a board vote. He also warned that if the board insists on resolving all legal and cost-allocation questions before any test wells or technical work, "You're going to be sitting here five years from now, in the same position that you're at now."

Shewchuk objected to what he called "a surprise resolution" on the agenda, noting that it had not been discussed in a chartered working group and then in the



Water Vision Working Group member Jeff Pearson expresses frustration with John Merchant's resolution, noting the group is already addressing the same issues.

Improvements Committee.

"That's just not the way a district should run, in my opinion," he said.

Shewchuk urged Merchant to let the working group do its job.

"Just don't put us in handcuffs before we get started," he said.

Pearson expressed frustration that the resolution appeared while the group was already working on the same issues. He emphasized the group's constructive mindset, saying they are trying to think "how we can" rather than "why we can't."

District Counsel Patrick Enright reinforced that, in any case, even a test well on private property must still come before the Improvements Committee and then the full board for a formal entry agreement, so no drilling or spending can occur without explicit board approval.

Director Tim Maybee pointed out flaws in the resolution, criticizing it for embedding opinions and undefined targets rather than establishing clear policy. He also noted it was the second time in two months that Merchant had placed a major resolution on the agenda without broader input from the board. In February, Merchant placed a resolution to declare a water shortage emergency on the agenda for a public hearing without direction from the other board members.

By the end of the discussion, Merchant agreed to withdraw his resolution on the well agreement.

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

Audits, Planning Are Topics at CSD Board Meeting

Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board tackled a wide range of issues during its nearly five-hour March 18 meeting.

Discussion included the monthly finance report, an update on overdue audits and a call to schedule a strategic planning session this summer. Separate stories in this issue cover the proposed 2026-27 budget, which would significantly increase rates, and a contentious debate over water.

Audits

During her monthly finance report, Director of Finance and Administration Cecilia Min acknowledged community concerns about delayed audits. When she arrived last May, she encountered significant accounting and system problems that she had previously described as a “Frankenstein.”

Min and her staff, including contracted accountants, completed the 2021-22 audit in about 3½ months. They then spent roughly six months preparing and cleaning records for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years. Work on 2024-25 was put on hold until the earlier years are completed.

Beginning in late January, she paused most of her work on the audits to focus on preparing the 2026-27 budget, although staff continued cleanup efforts. Her goal is to complete all outstanding audits, including fiscal year 2025-26, by the end of this calendar year.

Min cautioned that the timeline is a plan, not a guarantee, noting that each new area she reviews continues to reveal additional legacy issues.

One example emerged during her review of 15 months of invoices as part of developing the new budget using zero-based budgeting. She found many invoices had been entered in incorrect accounting periods, with inconsistent or missing information.

Min also reported ongoing problems loading data into the district’s accounting system.

“My Great Plains is stalling everywhere,



Finance Director Cecilia Min and Interim Director of Operations Travis Bohannon present their monthly reports at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District meeting on March 18.

and I don’t think I can go through another year without a cloud-based (updated) version,” she said. “This is very important because our server is actually not very stable.”

Monthly Financials

Min reported that through Jan. 31, operating revenues are about 57% of the annual budget, operating expenses are about 59% and administrative expenses are about 71%. Also, after seven months, the district had a \$448,000 deficit without property taxes.

Min said costs are being driven up by sharp increases in chemical prices and several unbudgeted emergency repairs, while some other lines appear historically under budgeted because they relied on unreliable past numbers.

As of January, the district had about \$12 million in cash and investments, down from \$15 million a year earlier. Min plans to transfer funds from investments into the operating account to restore roughly six months of cash on hand – about \$5 million – in operating reserves.

That would leave about \$7.8 million in restricted investment funds, which she described as relatively low compared to the total net assets of approximately \$24 million.

Strategic Planning

In another part of the meeting, Director Linda Butler emphasized that the district cannot continue operating without a clear, shared roadmap: a point she has raised for months. The last strategic planning session was held in 2021.



Director Linda Butler urges the board to schedule a strategic planning session, noting the last one was held in 2021.

dam and levee insurance coverage for \$47,500 in the coming year. The coverage had previously been dropped under former General Manager Mimi Morris.

District Counsel Patrick Enright said he will brief the board at a future meeting on updates to the Brown Act, California’s open meetings law.

Butler reported on a meeting of the Security Working Group, which includes two members from the Rancho Murieta Association and a former CSD board member. The group is evaluating whether existing surveillance systems are compatible with upgrades or will need to be replaced entirely.

The board also considered a staff request to create a new administration manager position to address chronic workload issues. Ultimately, directors approved the position and its job description and ordered a salary survey, but stopped short of funding or filling it, leaving that decision for a future budget cycle.

The board also approved numerous items on the consent calendar, including a task order for the district engineer to study whether the Rio Oso tank should be repaired or replaced, and the purchase of two new fire hydrants.

Directors also accepted a \$3.4 million detention basin from the Riverview subdivision, adopted an election schedule for the Nov. 3 election, and approved a cybersecurity policy along with a revised salary survey for non-represented employees.

The board’s next meeting will be at 5 p.m. Wednesday, April 15.

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

Association Board Advances GM Search

Continued from page 1

Revised Fine Schedule

In his report from the Governing Documents Committee, Adams explained that Assembly Bill 130 now generally caps HOA fines at \$100, unless a violation involves an “adverse health or safety impact.” He said he has been “very critical” of the law, calling it “extremely poorly written” and noting it was adopted through the state budget process without adequate review.

Still, Adams said RMA must comply. To do so, the board adopted a resolution identifying specific non-architectural rules tied to health and safety, allowing fines above \$100 to continue for those violations.

The resolution includes interference with RMA or CSD staff and volunteers, traffic safety rules such as speed limits and stop signs, and higher-risk behaviors, including fireworks, e-bike misuse, vandalism or attempted vandalism, unlawful activity and discharge of firearms. After President Patrick O’Hern read the resolution into the record, the board approved it unanimously.

Maintenance Projects

The South Entrance landscaping was briefly discussed, with O’Hern noting the project will be completed by in-house crews, resulting in cost savings. The crews will remove water features and other hardscape this spring, with new landscaping designed to comply with state restrictions on irrigating nonfunctional turf, Hart said.

The board approved the purchase of a new Kubota tractor for about

\$41,500, funded from existing reserves, replacing a heavily used 17-year-old unit that had exceeded its 15-year reserve life. Schaffner said the tractor is increasingly difficult to maintain, with parts no longer manufactured, requiring staff to fabricate components.

Adams praised the maintenance team for extending equipment life beyond reserve schedules, saying they “manage to keep equipment in really good working shape” and help to save money and keep dues lower.

Directors also approved \$7,240 for engineered playground fiber used to maintain safe fall zones under play equipment. Schaffner said the selected vendor offered competitive pricing and on-site installation.

Financial Statements

Director John Van Doran said the Finance Committee reviewed the 2025 financial statements and recommended acceptance. During the discussion, Adams asked why 2024 data was included; Finance Manager Colleen Hagyard explained that CPA reviews include prior-year comparisons.

Hagyard said the review process includes examining board minutes, checking for inconsistencies, ensuring compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and preparing the final report.

Adams noted reserves are about 85% funded – “an A+ in the HOA world” – and said the association’s finances are thoroughly reviewed. He also thanked Hagyard for her long service, while she credited past boards for maintaining strong financial discipline. The board unanimously accepted the report. ★

Joint Security Committee

A proposed resumption of a Joint Security Committee with the Rancho Murieta Community Services District was tabled to allow further discussion of its structure and scope. Hart said the idea grew out of his recent participation in a CSD security working group that is reviewing surveillance cameras throughout the community. Hart described the current system as “pretty dilapidated.”

Audience Comments

Tom Shewchuk raised two issues during public comment.

He urged RMA and the CSD to work with state agencies to improve safety on Jackson Highway after a recent crash in which an uninsured driver allegedly ran a red light and struck a golf cart at Murieta Drive. Although the location is outside RMA’s jurisdiction, he said it directly affects residents and suggested measures such as lowering speed limits.

He also questioned RMA’s dues structure for vacant lots. He noted that the CSD charges about one-third the rate for undeveloped parcels, while RMA charges the same full dues – about \$171.50 per month – regardless of development. As an owner of both a home and a vacant lot, he said he is paying two full RMA bills without an equivalent benefit and asked the board to consider a reduced rate similar to the CSD’s approach.

The board’s next meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 21.

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.

March 10

5:24 p.m., RMCSO Patrol responded to a welfare check request after a son reported being unable to contact his mother for two days. Upon arrival, patrol made contact with caregiver and then with the resident, who appeared in good health and showed no signs of medical distress. She was advised of the welfare check request made by her son. Area clear.

8:20 p.m., RMCSO Patrol responded to a gate arm incident at the Murieta North Lago Drive out-bound gate. A golf cart with a deactivated barcode entered the community through the outbound lane and struck the gate arm, knocking it from its bracket. The driver did not notify the gate officer and continued into the community. ABDI traffic viewer research identified barcode number registered to a Puerto Drive residence. Patrol made contact with the driver, who stated he entered through the outbound lane because his barcode was not functioning and the route was faster than using the visitor lane. Patrol reported no injuries and no damage to the golf cart. Driver was advised to contact the RMA HOA regarding the deactivated barcode.

March 13

2:08 p.m., Patrol responded to a report of a silver pickup driving at a

high rate of speed around Lake Calero. Upon arrival, officers located a silver Ford Lightning occupied by two juvenile subjects. Patrol made contact with the individuals and advised them of park speed limits and safety concerns. Both subjects were cooperative and agreed to operate their vehicle at safe speeds. No violations were directly observed and no citation was issued.

March 17

5:53 p.m., Patrol responded to a report of reckless driving involving a white Chrysler 300 near the North Beach area. The vehicle was located and the driver was contacted and advised regarding speed limits and traffic regulations. The driver was cooperative.

7:48 p.m., Patrol issued a citation for violation of RMA Rule II, Section 16: Unsafe transport of passengers (passengers riding in the bed of a pickup truck) while entering through the North Gate.

March 19

9:29 a.m., Responded to report of loose cattle behind a Puerto Drive residence. Upon arrival, RMA Compliance was on scene. Cattle had knocked over a front yard fountain and moved back toward the fence line. Owner advised ongoing issues with fence tampering near the cemetery, allowing cattle to leave ranch property. Rancher entered North Gate at approximately 9:33 a.m. and retrieved livestock.

March 20

12:03 a.m., Two cows breached a neighboring fence and entered a residential area. Patrol located them at Puerto Drive and remained on scene until the

rancher arrived. Rancher was advised regarding possible fence repairs.

March 21

12:03 a.m., Dispatch received a report of a possible traffic accident near the county bridge on Highway 16. Patrol responded and located a silver 2013 Honda Accord on the golf course near Hole 18 after it had driven through a fence line. The driver, identified as a 16-year-old resident, was outside the vehicle and reported no injuries. The driver stated he lost control of the vehicle and overcorrected.

4:27 p.m., Patrol responded to a report of a cow that had breached a fence and entered a residential property on Puerto Drive. Reporting party advised the animal was in the rear yard area. Patrol notified Dispatch to contact the rancher/animal control and assisted with temporary fence repairs.

March 22

5 a.m., Patrol observed a U-Haul truck parked at the Murieta Nail Lounge with a shattered glass front door. Upon inspection, Patrol observed damage to the ATM and cash register, indicating a burglary. Patrol remained on scene and notified Dispatch of a possible active burglary. The business owner arrived and advised his alarm activated at approximately 4:48 a.m. He reported observing two male suspects wearing black hoodies and masks on his Ring camera, using a crowbar to gain entry. Footage was unavailable due to inactive subscription. Patrol also noted the U-Haul appeared to be tampered with and possibly stolen. Incident was reported to the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office. ★

Utility Bills Could Rise \$92 Per Month in Rancho Murieta

Story and photo by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Average residential utility bills behind the gates in Rancho Murieta – covering water, wastewater, drainage, solid waste and patrol services – could jump by about 31.5%, or roughly \$92 per month, under a preliminary Rancho Murieta Community Services District budget proposal.

Finance and Administration Director Cecilia Min told the district's Finance Committee on March 12 that the average residential bill would increase from \$292.11 to \$384.18 under the proposed 2026-27 budget. The district currently serves about 2,917 service connections in Rancho Murieta, though rates vary by property type.

The proposed increase is driven largely by rising operating and administrative costs – projected to increase by about \$2.55 million next year – as well as the district's effort to rebuild reserves, rather than by any specific new development project.

Proposition 218 Notice

Committee members asked numerous questions about the cost increases, but ultimately agreed to forward the draft budget and rate structure to the full board for review at its March 18 meeting before staff mails the required Proposition 218 notice.

The notice – which must be mailed by March 31 – informs property owners of the proposed increase and establishes the maximum rates the board could adopt. Final rates may be lower but not higher.

Min stressed that the draft was not the final budget.

"This is a proposed budget. It's not approved. It's a draft, and the actual budget that we will be confirming is going to be in May and June," she told the committee. "So this is just a proposal. Everything can still be changed, and this is for the purpose of finding out what our rate should be."

Over the next two months, staff expects to receive more precise figures on items like insurance, including dam and levee



Finance and Administration Director Cecilia Min outlines how she used zero-based budgeting to build the proposed 2026-27 budget and rate increases.

coverage, and other major contracts, and will continue refining the numbers before the board adopts a final budget.

Zero-Based Budgeting

Min also explained why she used zero-based budgeting this year instead of the traditional "last year plus a few percent" approach. Prior budgets were built on incomplete and error-prone financial data, she said, with inconsistent account coding. Many invoices were recorded when paid rather than when the cost was incurred, distorting month-end and year-end financial results.

Because of that, Min said she and her team started from zero, creating a new budget by reviewing the last year and a half of vendor invoices to determine which expenses would be needed next year. She said the ground-up approach, though labor-intensive, was necessary to avoid simply rolling forward past mistakes and underbudgeting key costs again.

Min said most of the increase is driven by sharply higher operating and administrative costs. The draft budget also adds three new positions and increases the monthly reserve contribution for water and wastewater from \$16 to \$21.

"I'm proposing a \$5 increase because

we do need to prop up our reserves," she said.

Operational Costs

On the operations side, Min pointed to sharp increases in chemical prices, more frequent emergency repairs, and the need to rent equipment such as vector trucks, bypass pumps, generators, and excavators to maintain the district's aging water, sewer and drainage infrastructure. Rising costs for mandatory laboratory testing and upgrades to the district's SCADA control system are also contributing to higher expenses. Additional maintenance parts, tools, staff training and licensing requirements are further driving up operational costs. The estimated increase totals \$1.644 million.

Administrative Costs

On the administrative side, Min cited major increases in insurance premiums – including new coverage for dams and levees – as well as higher retiree and benefit costs, including retiree benefit obligations and employee health plans that turned out to be far greater than earlier budgets assumed. She also pointed to increased legal and compliance expenses related to water rights,

developer agreements and facility service agreements, as well as governance costs, including the upcoming board election and training for new directors.

Additional expenses include a long-delayed strategic planning effort and upgrades to administrative systems, including moving the district's Great Plains accounting system to a cloud host, adding backup internet service, and cleaning up and digitizing decades of paper records. Altogether, administrative costs are projected to increase by \$890,831.

Min again emphasized that the Prop. 218 notice will show the maximum potential rate – the legal ceiling – not a guaranteed final rate, and that as better cost information comes in over the next two months, the board will still have the opportunity to reduce rates or adjust line items before adopting the final budget and rates in June.

Past Rate Increases

Min said earlier rate increases were too modest and did not keep pace with rising costs, forcing the district to rely more heavily on property tax revenue to support operations rather than building reserves for future infrastructure needs.

She also showed a graphic indicating that the average residential water bill rose from about \$209 per month in 2021 to about \$283 in 2025, an increase of roughly \$73, or 35%, over five years.

"Across the water utility sector, costs have been rising for several years, yet typical rate increases have been only \$20 to \$30 per month," Min said. "Those increases don't even cover health plan premiums alone. ... So if we continue to do a 3.5% increase, we're never going to balance our budgets."

"These rising costs are not just affecting us; every utility in Northern California is going through the same thing," Min said after the meeting. "We can't run a deficit. We can't skip needed repairs."

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is made up of Board President John Merchant, Director Bill Gere, Director of Finance and Administration Cecilia Min, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder, Interim Operations Manager Travis Bohannon and other staff. The committee reviews financial issues in depth and reports its recommendations to the full board.

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

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



The End Is in Sight

Things are happening in Sactown and not every Kings fan is happy. Yes, even though our hometown ballers have won five out of the last eight games, there are long time Kings fans that aren't entirely thrilled.

This is because with each win the Kings statistically have a lesser chance of garnishing the No. 1 pick, or even a top four pick in the upcoming NBA draft.

So, what's the option. To intentionally try to lose a game. I hope our team never stoops to such measures. Tanking is a matter left better to the commissioner's office, and I have no doubt Adam Silver has ideas to fix the problem. In the meantime, playing the youngsters and getting a look at as many players as possible, all while giving it their best effort is why fans are buying tickets.

Sunday afternoon saw a raucous Golden One Arena heartily applauding a consistent effort by the Kings as hometown favorite Malik Monk decided to put on a show, scoring 32 points and adding six assists to boot.

Devin Carter, finally getting a chance to play on a consistent basis, chipped in with 16 points, five rebounds, and three assists.

Maxime Raynaud added a double-double with 22 points and 10 rebounds and has been winning fans literally all season with his consistent play.

The question remains can he complement Domantas Sabonis and play alongside him, or will he become just a capable backup for Sabonis when he's not on the floor.

Although I wish nothing but good things for Raynaud, I think the Kings have found a good backup center for years to come, but I'm not seeing the shot blocking ability that I would like to see from a 7-footer.

In the 126-122 win over the Brooklyn Nets the fans got to see newcomer Patrick Baldwin perform, and Patrick wasted no time in putting up nine points and shooting three for four from three-point land.

Doug McDermott did the same and the Kings will be faced with some uncomfortable decisions in the off season as they make decisions on who to keep and who to let go. Sadly, McDermott's 3-point shooting could have been used all season, but coach Christie relegated this talented sharpshooter

to the bench for the majority of the season for reasons that have never been very clear.

Yes. Decisions will be made and not all Kings fans are going to like them. Names like Precious Achiuwa, Dylan Cardwell, Devin Carter and others are not promised next season, although I believe all the aforementioned need to come back next year.

The draft will be a mystery until the ping pong balls do their thing but just know this Kings fans. This year's draft is deep, and whether the Kings choose #1 or #7 there is going to be a player with the talent to make the Sacramento Kings a better team.

More than anything what this franchise needs is people that can assess talent better than in the past. People that can separate the wheat from the chaff, the blue chippers from the pretenders.

Please, no more Marvin Bagleys or Thomas Robinsons. Surely, we can do better than the past has seen, and I'm convinced we will.

So, have heart Kings fans and let's continue to put our hands together for players like Russell Westbrook that is breaking all-time records right in front of our hometown fans!

Westbrook has been a bright spot all season and has done everything asked of him.

I'm hoping the younger players have been paying attention because there is much to learn from this can't miss future hall-of-famer.

Here's some positive but I believe very accurate news.

The Sacramento Kings are closer to becoming a playoff team than the NBA expects.

I don't like to dog on a coaching staff, but with the talent the Kings have and even in spite of the bad luck they've had with injuries, this team should have won 30 games.

Coach Christie is like a young rookie finding his way, but he has to do better than spout out that the Kings must play tough defense.

Start with being a better free-throw shooting team and take it from there.

Let's stick together and look forward to a winning 2027!

All the best! ★

It's Supposed to be a Race for Governor, but Candidates and Voters Seem Disengaged



By Dan Walters,
CALMatters.org

The shortage and costs of housing are, by any rational standard, one of California's most pressing issues, which is why several thousand advocates of affordable shelter gathered in Sacramento last week to ponder potential solutions.

Housing California, the event's sponsor, invited candidates for governor to participate in a panel discussion of how they would approach the housing crisis.

Neither of the two Republican candidates, Steve Hilton and Chad Bianco, appeared, which was not surprising given the left-leaning tenor of the event.

It was, however, odd that only four of the eight Democratic candidates showed up, since it was a terrific opportunity for them to impress a large audience of political activists, with just a few weeks remaining before voters begin marking and mailing their ballots for the June 2 primary election.

Of the four who participated in the housing panel, just one candidate, billionaire Tom Steyer, is in the top tier of candidates, as revealed in a new poll by the UC-Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, with just barely 10% support.

The other three — state school Superintendent Tony Thurmond, former Los

Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and former state Controller Betty Yee — collectively garnered just 6% support among the sample of voters, with Thurmond and Yee at 1% each.

Although California is a thoroughly blue state, the two Republicans were 1 and 2 in the poll, thus feeding worries among Democratic leaders that they could wind up that way in the June 2 voting if none of the Democrats catches fire.

Among the Democrats, Congressman Eric Swalwell and former Congresswoman Katie Porter polled highest at 13% each, followed by Steyer at 10%, former Attorney General Xavier Becerra at 5%, with Villaraigosa and San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan at 4%.

Mark DiCamillo, director of the poll, told the Los Angeles Times he is stunned by how fragmented and disengaged voters are about choosing the state's next governor.

"This is historic for me," DiCamillo said, "and especially given that none of the candidates have really a positive image rating with voters, also startling. I mean, perhaps one of the reasons why voters are disengaged, they're just not enthusiastic about any of the candidates. They're kind of sleepwalking to this election."

The lethargic nature of the contest is also demonstrated by the inability of the California Federation of Unions to settle on one Democrat, instead giving endorsements to four of the eight.

One could say, therefore, that the passive attitude of candidates vis-a-vis this

week's housing conference captures the broader lack of enthusiasm among candidates and voters.

This should be a referendum on how California deals with not only housing and homelessness but the many other issues that Gavin Newsom will leave behind when he exits the office next January, almost certainly embarking on a quest for the White House.

However, the gubernatorial campaign so far has revealed very few differences among the eight Democratic candidates on those issues, nor any truly novel proposals. In response to questions about housing, homelessness, health care and living costs, the four who did participate in Thursday's panel generally responded that they would spend a lot more money and impose new taxes on corporations and wealthy Californians to pay for it.

Given the paucity of new ideas and the overall lethargy, one could almost hope that Hilton and Bianco do finish 1-2 and give the state a Republican governor for the first time in two decades. The Capitol conflict that would ensue as a GOP governor battles with a Legislature dominated by Democrats would at least be interesting.

It would be karmic justice for a Democratic Party that apparently is incapable of generating enough energy to power a light bulb.

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. ★

Burn Piles Part of Broader Vegetation Clearance Work



Burn piles smolder along a section of the CIA Ditch. Photo courtesy of Rancho Murieta Properties

CAL FIRE crews ignite burn piles next to the Rancho Murieta Community Services District wastewater treatment plant on March 12. It is part of a district-wide effort to clear overgrown vegetation and reduce fire risk. Photo courtesy of Rancho Murieta Community Services District



This image shows a section of the CIA Ditch before clearance work began. Photo courtesy of Rancho Murieta Properties



The image shows a section of the CIA Ditch after clearance work was completed. Photo courtesy of Rancho Murieta Properties

By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - A collaborative effort between the Rancho Murieta Community Services District and representatives of the Cosumnes Irrigation Association is helping to clear overgrown vegetation, reduce fire fuel and improve access along the CIA ditch: one important example of a broader, ongoing maintenance effort across the community.

CIA Ditch

The work along the CIA Ditch grew out of discussions in 2025 between district staff and CIA representatives, including Rancho Murieta Properties project manager Jeff Pearson, to address vegetation buildup along the channel and adjacent property. The ditch, which conveys water from the Cosumnes River to Laguna Joaquin and downstream ranches, had sections where dense growth limited access and increased fire risk.

Pearson and CSD Utility Supervisor Corey Carskaddon worked together to identify the overgrown and impacted areas along the ditch where CAL FIRE inmate crews could remove heavy brush and create burn piles to reduce accumulated vegetation. The burn piles are formed from the cut brush and vegetation, allowing crews to consolidate excess material as part of fuel-reduction efforts.

Creating burn piles from removed vegetation allows crews to manage that material on site, with the piles typically burned later under controlled conditions when weather and air-quality regulations allow.

Crews began work in December and, as conditions allowed, cleared sections stretching from the Granlees Dam area to the lower Rancho Murieta Country Club lot. Additional work is expected to continue toward the Highway 16 crossing as crews become available.

The Cosumnes Irrigation Association, a partnership

between the CSD and private landowners, owns and operates Granlees Dam and the CIA Ditch. The district holds roughly a one-third ownership interest and is responsible for operating, maintaining and managing the ditch, with costs shared with the partners: Brianne and Kyriakos Tsakopoulos, the new owners of the Anderson Ranch; Carol Anderson Ward, the owner of equestrian center and hotel and the principal investor in Rancho Murieta Properties; and Pearson, who is the RMP property manager.

“This work is another example of a partnership working together to both benefit the interests of the partnership and the community as a whole,” Pearson said. “We look forward to doing more of this work in the future.”

Other CSD Projects

According to Carskaddon, the CIA Ditch project is part of a much larger program underway throughout Rancho Murieta that is designed to improve system

performance by clearing channels and outfalls that can become clogged with vegetation, while also reducing fuel loads that contribute to wildfire risk.

The CAL FIRE inmate crews have worked at numerous locations: Greens Park, Riverview Park, Lost Lake Basin, near the wastewater treatment plant, along the drainage ditch by the equestrian center and at multiple storm drain outfalls, basins, levee areas and lift station sites across the community.

Carskaddon said that in his previous experience with other agencies, programs like CAL FIRE’s inmate crews provide participants with opportunities to give back to the community while gaining valuable work experience and skills. After joining the district, he worked with CAL FIRE to better understand local crews’ capabilities and sought – and received – board approval for the district to participate in the program.

While cost efficiency is a factor, the primary benefit

is the crews’ training and ability to safely and effectively perform large-scale vegetation management and fuel reduction, he said. The partnership allows the district to address critical maintenance needs more efficiently than it could with existing staff alone.

“Overall, this has been a very positive and productive collaboration: one that supports infrastructure maintenance, reduces fire

risk and provides meaningful community benefits,” Carskaddon said.

With more work planned in the coming weeks, the district expects to continue using the program to address maintenance needs throughout Rancho Murieta as conditions and crew availability allow.

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

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Little League Celebrates 35 Years with Festive Opening Day



All 31 teams parade to the ceremony in decorated pickups and trailers, including the Rangers with their patriotic red, white and blue theme.



The Mariners run onto the field after the emcee introduces them.



Rocco Vellutini, the league's youngest player, winds up for the ceremonial first pitch.

crowd-pleasing flyover arranged by On the Ball Aviation, with coordination led by board member Rob Winter.

Board member Ashley Fields then led players and parents in the Little League pledge, emphasizing sportsmanship, respect for umpires and doing one's best.

Reid Highlights Volunteers, Sponsors, History

Taking the microphone, Reid welcomed families to opening day and reflected on the league's growth over the past three and a

half decades. "This is a beautiful day for baseball and softball," he said, noting that past opening days have included wind, rain and even sleet.

Reid thanked volunteers, parents, coaches and managers for the countless hours that make the season possible.

He also underscored the role of sponsors, whose support helps to keep fees affordable while funding field upgrades and equipment. Opening day sponsors Randy and Patty Jenco of Town and Country Real Estate were

recognized for backing this year's ceremony and their long-standing support of the league.

Sponsor funding has helped to deliver improvements, including new batting cage turf, a mound on Field 2 and upgraded sound systems.

Reid also recognized District 54 for organizing tournaments and All-Stars, and praised the league's youth umpires, urging families to support and respect them.

Reflecting on the league's history, Reid said the organization has come a long way from its early

days on a small field near the gas station.

"Now we have coaches and managers who played here, and grandparents who helped start the league," he said, describing the current complex as "the nicest fields around."

He also highlighted recent achievements, including the 2025 Minors Bulldogs' Tournament of Champions victory and a milestone season for the 10U softball All-Stars, who captured a district title and advanced to sections.

Focus on 'Core Memories'

Reid encouraged families to focus on what matters most.

"This is about making core memories," he said, pointing to a full slate of

games scheduled for opening day and throughout the season.

Continuing a league tradition, the ceremonial first pitch was thrown by the youngest player, Rocco Vellutini, and the oldest player, Billy Baiz, symbolizing the full span of the league's players.

The celebration concluded with a community hot-dog lunch sponsored by the league and served by the Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta, before players and families headed off to the day's games.

"With that, let's have a great season of baseball," Reid said. "Thank you all for all that you do ... and let's play ball."

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