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Candidates Discuss Election Issues

Water, Finances and Public Trust Emerge as Central



Rancho Murieta Community Services District board candidates answer questions from League of Women Voters moderator Paula Lee during the Oct. 7 forum at the Rancho Murieta Association Building. Photo by Gail Bullen

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Strengthening Rancho Murieta's water supply, financing the replacement of aging infrastructure, and restoring public trust emerged as central issues when 10 Community Services District board candidates gathered for an Oct. 7 forum at the Rancho Murieta Association Building.

Although candidates broadly supported better planning, stronger management, and improved communication with residents, they differed over the viability of wells and the relationship between water supply and development. Several advocated grants and bond financing to help pay for infrastructure improvements.

The League of Women Voters of Sacramento County organized the forum, with local League member Lilli DuVal coordinating and Paula Lee moderating. The League

assembled questions from suggestions submitted by the public.

Questions covered service fees, reserves, alternative funding sources, board oversight, drought protection, additional water connections, infrastructure and community trust.

To keep the discussion moving and maintain audience interest, Lee used a rotating format in which groups of candidates answered different questions. Candidates had one minute each for opening statements and closing remarks and 90 seconds for answers, along with three opportunities to respond to questions directed to another group. Not every candidate answered every question, and some prepared questions were not reached.

Four board seats are at stake in the Nov. 3 election. Eight candidates are competing for three four-year seats, while Michael Martel and John Van Doren are seeking one two-year seat.

Jeff Berkheimer

Berkheimer, Lodi's electric utility director, argued that securing more water for existing residents should take precedence over the community's debate about development. "We need more water for the homes that we have now, and if we solve that issue, the bickering about 600 more new homes basically goes away," he said. He urged the district to pursue wells, permitting Lake Clementia for drinking-water use and expanded use of recycled water before another major drought.

Berkheimer also criticized what he described as board interference in daily operations, linking it to staff turnover and lost institutional knowledge. He said directors should establish policy and allow employees to implement it. He supported bond financing for major projects and argued that developer fees and additional property tax revenue

Continued on page 2

Marti Brown Named CSD General Manager

**Rancho Murieta CSD
News Release**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Community Services District has appointed Marti Brown as its new general manager, effective Oct. 19.

"Marti brings a strong combination of municipal management and special-district experience to RMCS," said John Merchant, RMCS board president. "Her background managing complex public organizations, overseeing infrastructure and finances, and working directly with communities will be a valuable asset to the district."

Brown brings more than two decades of local government leadership experience to Rancho Murieta. She most recently served as city manager of Willows for five years, overseeing the city's administration and operations.

During her tenure in Willows, Brown oversaw a broad range of municipal services and worked closely with elected officials, staff, residents and regional partners on the city's financial, operational, infrastructure and community priorities. Her tenure included strengthening the city's long-term financial planning, advancing capital improvement projects, implementing new technology and administrative systems, and guiding significant infrastructure and finance initiatives.

Before serving as city manager of Willows, Brown served as general manager of the Kensington Police Protection and Community Services District in Contra Costa County. This gives her direct experience in leading a special district and working within a governance structure similar to RMCS's.

Brown also served as city manager of Marysville, providing executive leadership for the historic Yuba County community.

"I look forward to joining the Rancho Murieta Community Services District and working with the board, staff, residents and local partners to build on the district's strengths and address the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead," Brown said. "RMCS has the important responsibility of thoughtfully balancing growth and development with the preservation of the community's quality of life, while also responsibly managing its finite water resources."

Continued on page 3

Accounts of Controversy Disputed

CSD Candidate Says News Reports Mischaracterized His Actions

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Bill Gere, who has cited his municipal experience as a qualification for serving on the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Board, left his position as Hollister Municipal Airport manager in 2008 following controversy over his removal of a proposed CAL FIRE base from a planning document.

Contemporary newspaper reports on SanBenito.com said Gere removed the proposal after the airport advisory commission recommended including it but before the plan reached the Hollister City Council. A Jan. 23, 2008, article, "Airport Manager Placed on Paid Leave," described the change as unauthorized.

In a written response to the River Valley Times, Gere disputed that characterization, saying he was carrying out fiscal direction from City Manager Clint Quilter's office to preserve airport land for revenue-generating aviation uses.

"Accusations that I made 'unauthorized' rogue changes were false," Gere wrote.

Gere subsequently was placed on paid administrative leave, and his employment ended the following month. City officials did not publicly confirm whether the planning dispute prompted his

leave, and SanBenito.com reported that it was unclear whether he was fired or left voluntarily.

Gere said his departure was voluntary because his family had decided to relocate to Palo Alto for his daughter's schooling. He described the leave as a transition intended to ease political tensions

before his departure.

At the Oct. 7 CSD candidate forum, Gere referred to his experience "having been a department head for a small-sized city down south of San Jose for a number of years." He did not identify the city in that statement.

In his candidate

Continued on page 11



Bill Gere, an appointed Rancho Murieta Community Services District director now seeking election, disputes published accounts of a controversy during his tenure as Hollister Municipal Airport manager. File photo by Gail Bullen

Candidates Discuss Election Issues

Continued from page 1
could help offset costs otherwise borne by current residents. A commitment to a Lodi City Council meeting limited his participation.

Stephen Booth

Booth identified putting the district’s financial house in order as his priority, beginning with completing overdue audits and determining the money available in each reserve fund. He supported seeking grants and presenting bond financing to voters, saying long-term borrowing could spread major repair costs over decades rather than impose steep immediate increases.

Booth stressed the district should begin preparing an urban water management plan, saying it was approaching the 3,000-connection threshold that would trigger the requirement. He called for updated water-supply information and a plan looking ahead 20 years. He said additional development should depend on demonstrated water supplies, while cautioning against allowing analysis to become an excuse for inaction. He did not rule out wells but raised concerns about production, water quality and landowner agreements.

Booth cited experience negotiating and administering contracts, regulations and policies, as well as overseeing staff. He said he intended to be “the voice of the community” and work with all stakeholders.

Maria Caudill

Caudill cited more than 20 years of public- and private-sector experience, including building coalitions and managing complex organizations. She summarized her priorities as restoring public trust, making timely decisions on key issues and involving stakeholders.

Caudill repeatedly called for planning with firm deadlines, saying the district must move beyond responding to one crisis after another. She proposed that, within the new board’s first six months, directors empower the general manager and staff to develop a one-year priority plan. More detailed financial reports and analysis of financing options would help directors understand costs and consequences before making decisions, she said.

Caudill was skeptical of relying on wells and said she needed clearer facts before taking a position on additional

water connections. She also urged greater attention to water quality. To rebuild public trust, she proposed quarterly public forums and consistent operating procedures that would remain in place through staff turnover.

Tim Dec

Dec said concern about district finances drew him into the race. He supported completing audits, rebuilding reserves and examining whether property tax revenue could increasingly support reserves as service charges cover operating costs. He also favored reviewing the balance between fixed charges and water-use charges to help reduce the burden on residents who consume less water.

Dec supported completing feasibility work on wells and Lake Clementia, including evaluating cost, water quality, production and seasonal reliability. He also suggested exploring a connection with another water agency. Rather than repeatedly discussing incomplete proposals, he said the district should finish the analysis and either proceed or eliminate an option. He pledged to work toward implementing board decisions even when he was on the losing side of a vote.

Bill Gere

Gere emphasized fiscal discipline, questioning the approval of projects without designated budget funding. He advocated doing more work in-house to reduce reliance on contractors and proposed adding staff capacity to seek grants and manage construction projects. He opposed wells as a viable water-supply solution and called for extended planning sessions involving stakeholders to establish agreement on the facts.

Gere defended his frequent social media posts and encouraged residents to attend meetings and speak directly with directors. Caudill responded by calling for the district to use social media to provide authoritative information about its policies and procedures. “They need to be the official line of communication,” she said, so residents receive current information rather than relying on third parties.

Peter Reagan

“So, I want somebody on the board who knows how plumbing works,” Reagan said. He installed some of Rancho Murieta’s first underground pipelines in 1972 and owned his company for 60 years before



retiring. Now working as a district inspector, he also cited experience installing plumbing at water treatment plants elsewhere in Sacramento County. He argued that practical knowledge would help the board avoid infrastructure mistakes and called for scheduled rehabilitation of aging sewer facilities before failures require emergency repairs.

Reagan favored increased water storage, conservation, and continued exploration of a second source of supply. He urged consulting local well drillers about groundwater possibilities. He also supported reviewing developer impact fees and seeking grants, while cautioning that additional rate increases might be necessary.

Tom Shewchuk

Shewchuk urged voters dissatisfied with the district’s direction to elect new leadership. “If you think it’s time for a change, now is the time for a change,” he said. “You can’t vote for the same thing and expect something different.” He said directors should focus on a long-term vision while allowing staff to run the district and proposed more respectful meetings and weekly updates from the general manager.

On water, Shewchuk advocated pursuing wells, additional storage and permitting Lake Clementia simultaneously, while reaching a definite conclusion on whether wells are feasible. He also called for preventive infrastructure maintenance and a review of the balance between fixed water charges and consumption charges to ease the burden on residents who use less water.

Shewchuk cited his 31 years at Intel in Folsom as experience that would help him evaluate information and make multimillion-dollar decisions.

Catherine Silvera

Silvera, a recently retired attorney with 36 years of experience, most of it in the Sacramento County Counsel’s office, said she wanted to bring that expertise to CSD.

Silvera said CSD’s role is to provide water, sewer, garbage and security services, while Sacramento County decides whether to approve development. “CSD is not here to approve or disapprove development,” she said, noting that the district has input during the county’s development review process.

Silvera identified resolving costly

litigation, obtaining legally defensible water-supply information, and empowering district management as her leading priorities. She stressed the need for a third water storage tank because the Rio Oso tank is failing. She also called for connecting recycled-water pipelines for irrigation and pursuing infrastructure grants. She said the new general manager and operations leadership should receive the policies, resources and independence needed to succeed.

Michael Martel

Martel supported exploring wells, permitting Lake Clementia for drinking water and adding storage. He also advocated expanding the use of recycled water, including for irrigation at Stonehouse Park, to reduce demand for drinking water. On finances, he favored grants and partnerships with other water agencies to identify operating efficiencies and reduce costs.

Martel proposed streaming board meetings and involving residents with relevant expertise in district committees, including personnel matters. He also called for the restoration of a security advisory committee. In closing, he highlighted security as an issue that deserves more attention and supported cameras, fire monitoring, and other technologies to help protect the community.

John Van Doren

Van Doren took a cautious position on development, saying the district should not add homes beyond its existing contractual obligations without adequate water. He opposed pursuing wells as a cost-effective solution and emphasized the district’s dependence on the Cosumnes River and existing reservoir storage. He also questioned whether extending recycled-water service to Stonehouse Park would justify the expense.

Van Doren favored bonds to spread infrastructure improvement costs over time and said litigation should not automatically rule out borrowing. He supported placing daily operations in the hands of qualified staff and pledged to respond directly to residents’ concerns, seek answers when necessary and follow up. He described his interest as preserving the community and said he had no financial interest in its development. ★

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Election Forum Attendance Low

About 40 People Attended

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Approximately 40 people attended the Oct. 7 Rancho Murieta Community Services District Candidate Forum, following social media criticism of restrictions on who could attend.

The Rancho Murieta Association limited attendance to RMA members and their guests because the event was held at the association's building. The restriction drew objections from residents concerned that nonmember district voters outside the gates would be excluded.

RMA board members and two staff members helped set up the meeting.

Three candidates — Jeff Berkheimer, Catherine Silvera and Tom Shewchuk — hired a videographer to record the

forum. Contacted on Oct. 9, Shewchuk said they would post a link to the recording and a transcript to Facebook and Nextdoor later that day.

The League of Women Voters of Sacramento County organized the forum, with local League board member Lilli Duval coordinating and Paula Lee moderating. The League is a nonpartisan organization that neither supports nor opposes candidates.

The League developed questions using suggestions submitted by community members. Topics included district finances, water supplies, aging infrastructure, board oversight and public trust.

To keep the discussion moving, Lee rotated questions among groups of candidates rather than requiring all 10 to answer



Many seats remained empty when the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Candidate Forum was held at the Rancho Murieta Association Building Oct. 7. Photo by Gail Bullen

every question. Candidates received one minute each for opening statements and closing remarks. But 90 seconds for answers. Each also received three cards allowing additional participation on questions directed to another group. Mary Kay Williams served as timekeeper.

The Nov. 3 ballot includes two separate CSD board contests. Eight candidates are seeking three seats with four-year terms: Jeff Berkheimer, Stephen Booth, Maria Caudill, Tim Dec, William Gere, Peter

Reagan, Tom Shewchuk, and Catherine Silvera. Michael Martel and John Van Doren are competing for one seat with a two-year term.

Campaigning has developed around two broad camps. Save Our Lakes & Open Spaces, known as SOLOS, has endorsed Booth, Gere, Caudill and Van Doren. The group opposes further development unless an adequate water supply can be secured and has organized numerous gatherings to promote its endorsed

candidates.

Silvera, Shewchuk and Berkheimer are campaigning together, advocating changes in the district's leadership and approach to water planning. Dec, Reagan and Martel generally shared their call for change and aligned with them on several issues discussed at the forum. All six agree that development should proceed only when an adequate water supply has been secured. They participated in an invitation-only candidate meeting Oct. 5 that drew

about 140 attendees.

The two groups did not agree internally on every issue. Candidates from both camps supported stronger financial planning and the exploration of grants or bond financing for major infrastructure improvements.

A separate story featuring all 10 candidates' answers to questions about their experience, reasons for running and the most urgent issues facing CSD appeared in the Oct. 9 issue and is available at theriver-valleytimes.com. ★

Marti Brown Named CSD General Manager

Continued from page 1

"I am excited to be part of that effort and to help position the district for a strong and sustainable future."

Brown's experience includes municipal administration, finance, budgeting, infrastructure planning, risk management, human resources, public works, community services and organizational management. She has also worked extensively

with elected boards and councils, community stakeholders, local, regional and state agencies and public-sector labor and professional organizations.

As general manager, Brown will serve as the district's chief executive officer and oversee the day-to-day operations of RMCS, including its water, wastewater, solid waste, stormwater and drainage and private security divisions. ★



Marti Brown is the incoming CSD general manager. She begins her duties Oct. 19. Photo courtesy of CSD

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Fun and Community Giving Come Together at Summerfest

Story and photos by Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Carnival rides, live music and neighbors catching up with friends filled Stonehouse Park as Summerfest returned to Rancho Murieta Oct. 1-3, with sponsors and volunteers helping turn three days of entertainment into support for community projects.

Despite Saturday’s heat, Summerfest Board President Sherry Carrillo said the event ran smoothly, with families enjoying the carnival, children dancing in front of the stage and adults gathering for games and tournaments. “Everything went really, really well,” she said.

Carrillo said attendance was slightly lower than last year.

Carrillo emphasized that the annual celebration depends on more than the people buying wristbands. Sponsors cover most of the event’s costs, she said, making it possible to hold Summerfest while keeping admission prices steady for the past two years.

“Without the sponsors, we would not have Summerfest at all,” she said.

The festivities began Thursday with a sponsors-only wine gala featuring a Yacht Rock Revival theme and music by the Yacht Rockers. Raley’s served as this year’s title sponsor.

In her welcoming remarks, Carrillo reminded sponsors that their support has lasting benefits long after the carnival has left and the music has stopped.

“Every sponsorship, every donation, and every dollar spent here helps us give back to this community,” she said.

Over the years, Summerfest has helped fund pickleball courts, lights at the dog park, baseball field amenities, the splash park, sports fields and scholarships for local students, she said.

“You are investing directly back into our community,” Carrillo told the sponsors.

Summerfest began in 1999 with a chili cook-off and a rock



Lisa Eppler shows off the prize that Tommy Eppler wins by popping five of eight balloons in a carnival dart game.



Josiah Romo takes the wheel of a pint-sized carnival car.



Twins Brooklyn and Gracelyn Pollock take a spin on a motorcycle ride.



Colorful rides light up Stonehouse Park during Summerfest.

wall, growing into Rancho Murieta’s second-largest community event, surpassed only by the Fourth of July celebration. The nonprofit has raised more than \$1 million, including donated services, for educational and recreational projects benefiting Rancho Murieta youth and families.

Friday’s Family Fun Night brought carnival rides, food trucks and a program that

included adult trivia and a character meet-and-greet for children. Adam Aldama & The Aces returned with their Bruno Mars tribute show, drawing praise from Carrillo and providing a soundtrack for youngsters dancing near the stage.

Of the children, “That was the cutest thing ever,” Carrillo said.

The carnival, again provided by Brass Ring, offered attractions for different ages and appetites for thrills. Carrillo said the swings, Ali Baba and Zipper were among the popular rides. Children described Ali Baba, which carried riders up and down, as the scariest, she said.

Carrillo also praised the carnival crew’s responsiveness. The owner stayed in contact throughout the event, and a manager remained on-site around the clock, she said.

Saturday’s schedule included bingo, poker, cornhole and a petting zoo, followed by music from returning DJ Louie Giovanni. Carrillo said the cornhole tournament drew a large gathering, and people were out dancing that night.

The heat affected attendance when people arrived Saturday, with attendance jumping between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., Carrillo said. Although organizers had hoped that moving Summerfest to October would bring cooler weather, they still faced a hot afternoon.

“You’re just really at the mercy of Mother Nature,” she said.

Carrillo, who helped serve drinks during bingo, said she had to stop and cool off a few times. She believed the heat also



Fallon Ochoa enjoys her first merry-go-round ride.

reduced attendance at the petting zoo, which featured animals including baby goats, a pony and a llama.

Rancho Murieta Association maintenance workers put up a tent and fan for the animals and provided running water, she said. Carrillo would like to bring back the petting zoo next year if the weather is cooler.

Behind the attractions were around 100 volunteers who helped set up, serve guests and keep the event running. Members of the Pleasant Grove High School wrestling team and their parents again supplied much of that help. Carrillo said the team considers Summerfest its biggest fundraiser. Kiwanis volunteers pitched in.

Carrillo credited RMA Maintenance Manager Troy Schaffner and his crew with responding quickly whenever organizers needed something changed. Workers received

wristbands for their families so they could enjoy the event and see the results of their efforts.

The all-volunteer Summerfest Board works throughout the year, meeting monthly and handling assignments around jobs and family responsibilities. Nearly all its members also work, Carrillo said, and some are raising young children.

In her sponsor-night remarks, Carrillo thanked fellow board members Mike Martel, Makayla Oei, Desiree Harper, Kim Doughty, Chloe Carrillo, Jake Killian, Nona Gunnell, Vanessa Shay and Dawn Klein.

The work, she said, pays off both in what Summerfest contributes to the community and in the enjoyment, it brings to residents of all ages.

As she told sponsors Thursday night: “Ride the rides, listen to the music, eat too much, and enjoy seeing your neighbors and friends.” ★



Children dance and play near the stage as a Bruno Mars tribute band performs Friday night.



The Zipper lights up the night as riders tumble in its rotating cars.



Children ride mining carts through the Lost Mine attraction.

Future Voters Cast Ballots in 2026 Statewide Mock Election

Sacramento County Office of Education News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Democracy comes alive when youth transition from classroom instruction to hands-on civic participation. Middle and high school students at Leo A. Palmiter Jr./Sr. High School cast ballots in the California Student Mock Election, experiencing the democratic process firsthand and learning the power of informed voting ahead of the Nov. 3 General Election.

“Voting today made me realize how important every single vote is,” shared a Palmiter student voter. “It was exciting to see how the whole process works and know that our voices and ideas matter.”

The campus library transformed into an official polling station complete with voting booths, paper ballots and ballot boxes. Taking part in the hands-on simulation gave students a look at Election Day while instilling a deeper understanding of civic responsibility, electoral integrity and the value of an informed vote.

“Students had thoughtful questions about what ballot propositions mean, who gets to



Middle and high school students at Leo A. Palmiter Jr./Sr. High School cast ballots in the California Student Mock Election. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County Office of Education

participate and how votes are tallied,” said Palmiter Principal Brett Homesley. “The mock election gave them ways to explore those questions and see how civic duty works in real life.”

Participating in this event gave students valuable insight into the significance of civic engagement and public service. Coordinated by the California Secretary of State and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the statewide initiative helps youth discover the importance of elections and the power of their voices in the democratic process. Results are available now at: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/studentmockelection/mock-election-results/2026-results>

Civic learning does not end at the ballot box. Educators, families and community partners looking to introduce fundamental civic concepts to youth can explore the PBS LearningMedia Election Collection for nonpartisan educational guides. Additional interactive tools designed to inspire a lifelong passion for civic learning are available through iCivics. ★

Society for the Blind Announces Blindness Awareness Month in October

Nonprofit Society for the Blind News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Nonprofit Society for the Blind in Sacramento is encouraging local residents to honor Blindness Awareness Month throughout October by connecting people with vision loss to services so they can gain the skills they need to stay independent and thrive.

“Losing your sight can be a daunting, isolating experience, but it’s not the end of the road,” Shari Roeseler, executive director, Society for the Blind said. “With the right training, assistive tools and a community of support, a vibrant new way of living is completely within reach. During Blindness Awareness Month, we want to make sure everyone knows that people can live their best lives with vision loss or blindness. If you or someone you know is experiencing vision loss, please reach out to Society for the Blind today. We offer a support system and wide array of instructors who are blind or have low vision so you can build the skills you need, whether you are a child,



For more than 70 years, Sacramento-based Society for the Blind has continued to create innovative ways to empower individuals living with low vision or blindness to discover, develop and achieve their full potential. Photo courtesy of Nonprofit Society for the Blind

working-age adult or senior.” For more than 70 years, Sacramento-based Society for the Blind has continued to create

innovative ways to empower individuals living with low vision or blindness to discover, develop and achieve their full potential.

Since 1954, Society for the Blind has grown from a dedicated group of volunteers to a nationally recognized agency and the

only comprehensive rehabilitative teaching center that provides services for a 27-county region of Northern California. The nonprofit provides low-vision eye care, life and job skills training, mentorship and access to tools to maintain independence for more than 5,000 youth, working-age adults and seniors experiencing vision loss each year.

In addition to its onsite Low Vision Clinic and assistive technology store, Society for the Blind offers four core classes – orientation and mobility, independent living skills, assistive technology and braille – to ensure people with vision loss can stay active, employed and living life to the fullest. The nonprofit also provides a program for seniors that includes support groups and classes. For youth, Society for the Blind offers a support groups for caregivers and parents of children with vision loss. The nonprofit also provides a braille production program and hosts events open to the public.

To learn more or make a donation, visit www.SocietyfortheBlind.org. ★



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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Gut Punch as Simmons Is Out

By V.G. Harris

Golden One Center will entertain a slightly different attitude as the Sacramento Kings are poised to begin the start of the 2026-27 NBA season.

Former three-time all-star and defensive standout Ben Simmons will not only be out for the start of the season, but it has also been reported that he will be out for the entirety of the 2026-27 campaign.

In practice Simmons sustained an Achilles tear to his right ankle which will take at least a year of rehabilitation.

For a team already spiraling after an abysmal 0-5 preseason, and the only team in the NBA to not win a single preseason game thus far, the Kings are staring at the Friday night opener in utter shock.

Sacramento is no stranger to adversity, but this disheartening news comes on the heels of a preseason that has not been kind to coach Doug Christie. Multiple articles have come out in recent days critical of this frenetic style of managing the preseason lineups and substitution patterns.

The current 0-5 record is not only the worst record in the NBA, it portends a myriad of issues as the Kings look to the opener with the Trailblazers on Friday night.

One article went so far as to rate Christie as the worst coach in the NBA. Amid the distraction of sordid shots aimed at the coach, notable former head coaches with a bevy of experience sit on the sidelines hoping for a call. At the top of the list is Mike Budenholzer, former coach of the Milwaukee Bucks and holder of an NBA title. Budenholzer spent 17 years learning his craft under legendary coach Gregg Popovich. Two-time coach of the year, Budenholzer compiled a 520-363 in 11 seasons as an NBA coach, and along with Tom Thibodeau ranks among two of the most employable candidates today.

Suffice it to say, if the noise gets any louder in Kings land, fans will be clamoring for better leadership, and who can blame them.

I still cannot believe the lineups coach Christie put on the hardwood during the pre-season, or the confounding reason he had for sitting 6-8 players at a time, while players

that have already been cut from the team not only played considerable minutes, but actually started games.

That being said, the Kings have a game to play, and going into that game with a positive spirit will be the order of the day.

Coming out of the preseason, Sacramento has every reason to believe that first round draft choice Darius Acuff Jr. is going to be the point guard of the future, and Emmanuel Sharpe has given fans every reason to be excited about the energy and defense he brings to the table.

The loss of Ben Simmons is a multiple gut punch, but throwing in the towel is not in the equation, and responding to adversity is how teams grow into something bigger.

I look for opening night to bring a sell-out crowd to Golden One Arena, and with them a chance for head coach Doug Christie to hit the reset button and silence some of his critics.

Everyone loves an underdog and look no further than coach Christie if you're looking for someone to root for.

Both Domantas Sabonis and Zach Lavine have shown no signs of lingering injuries, and Wednesday night looms large as the last opportunity for Christie and his Kings to break a preseason losing streak and go into the regular season on a high note.

The Trailblazers have already bested Sacramento just last week, and it wasn't a contest from the jump. That needs to change and players need to come to play.

I expect a much different season out of Zach Lavine. The same can be said of Keegan Murray, who thus far has been disappointing in preseason. That needs to change and no better time than Wednesday night.

On your feet Kings fans because the rest of the NBA has already counted you out and wouldn't it be something special to prove them wrong.

Look for GM Scott Perry to make some type of move soon that will bring support to Darius Acuff Jr. at the point guard position.

Does Russell Westbrook shock the world and return for one last season. Anything is possible but stay tuned.

All the best Kings fans! ★

New California Laws Arise From Latest Legislative Skirmishes in Endless ‘Tort Wars’



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

The state Capitol is an arena where lobbyists for thousands of interest groups battle over issues that mostly involve money — very often big money. The Legislature and the governor can, and often do, write into law new provisions that financially benefit one interest or are costly for another.

One of the longest-running conflicts, dubbed “tort wars,” pits lawyers who file personal injury lawsuits and their allies against business interests and their insurers.

They fight over laws that specify which actions cause damages, known as “torts,” which can be the subject of liability lawsuits and what compensation can be collected if such cases prevail.

The stakes can be immense, involving many billions of dollars, so for tort warriors it’s a perpetual game of defining new, legally actionable acts; expanding or shrinking those already on the books, or devising tactics to thwart those employed by the other side.

The dynamics of tort politics were demonstrated one night in September 1987, as that year’s legislative session was nearing adjournment.

Veteran lobbyists for major tort war interests had been exploring a potential multi-point deal to resolve some long-simmering issues with key legislators behind closed

doors. The negotiators took a break for dinner and drinks at what was then Sacramento’s famous political watering hole, Frank Fat’s restaurant.

Spontaneously, as the liquor flowed and food was consumed, negotiations restarted right there, as Willie Brown, then the much-celebrated speaker of the state Assembly, bounced from table to table.

The result was the infamous “napkin deal” that gave everyone involved at least part of what they wanted. It was jotted down on a napkin, quickly drafted into legislation and passed with no public input.

One provision — which years later haunted Brown and other politicians — protected the tobacco industry from lawsuits by disease-stricken former smokers. (Footnote: I and the late Jay Michael, a lobbyist for medical interests who was one of the participants, co-wrote a book about lobbying that includes a detailed account of how the napkin deal came about.)

This brief history of tort wars sets the stage for what has been happening recently, including in the just-concluded 2026 legislative session.

Two years ago, the business side scored a significant victory with passage of two bills that narrowed the scope of the Private Attorneys General Act, which allows workers to sue their employers in the name of the state for alleged violations of workplace laws.

Employer groups had qualified a ballot measure to overhaul PAGA, as the law is known, which prodded lawyers and other rival interests to agree to a compromise in return for dropping the measure.

The 2026 session, as usual, featured a couple of other tort-related measures.

One, Assembly Bill 1776, is a significant expansion of the Cartwright Act, California’s long-standing law prohibiting monopolistic arrangements among businesses.

The state’s Law Revision Commission proposed extending it to actions by a single corporation that had monopolistic effects and allowing private parties to file suits under the revised law.

Business interests opposed the entire concept, saying it was unneeded, and they particularly disliked the private right of action. Before the bill received final approval that part was stricken, limiting enforcement to the attorney general or a local prosecutor.

The second measure, Senate Bill 690, arose out of an American Bar Association publication describing how some California attorneys were using, or misusing, California’s law against secret wiretaps to demand payment from corporations for using website tracking software to gather information.

Business groups depicted the practice as extortion, and SB 690 was drafted and enacted to make using the wiretap law this way much more difficult.

This year’s legislative session is over, but tort warriors already are gearing up for the next one.

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. ★

Social Security Matters

Did I Understand you right - I won't get all my SS benefits immediately?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I was a little confused with one of your past articles. This September I hit my full retirement age and for every month I continue to delay, my SS benefit goes up a little more. But reading your article sounds like the extra benefits are only added at the end of the year. For example, let’s say that at my full retirement age in September I get \$3,524, and in January 2027 I would get \$3,619. According to the Ask Rusty article I read, if I start my benefits in June of 2027, I will have earned \$3,735, but it sounds like I would only get \$3,619 up until the end of the year, and then they would adjust it. If this is the case, would I get retroactive money back for the 6 months I did not get the correct amount? **Signed: Seeking Clarification**

Dear Seeking: Thanks for your inquiry. Your understanding of the previous Ask Rusty article is correct. If you start your benefits in June 2027 (10 months after your full retirement age (or your “FRA,” in Sept. 2026), you will initially only get

the Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) you earned through the end of 2026. The DRCs you earned from January 2027 to June 2027 would not be credited until January 2028, and you would not get any retroactive benefits for the DRCs earned during the January – June 2027 timeframe.

SSA’s reasoning for this is somewhat confusing but has to do with your ability to claim retroactive benefits when you claim after reaching your full retirement age. When claiming after reaching your FRA you have the ability to claim benefits retroactively for up to six months. So, to avoid potentially overlapping benefit payments, SSA defers applying your current year’s DRCs until January of the following year. Thus, you essentially lose the extra 2027 DRC money for the remainder of 2027. And, FYI, the one exception to this rule is that when benefits are claimed mid-year at age 70, all DRCs are immediately paid. Please understand that I’m not endorsing this SSA rule; only trying to explain how it works and why. Like many SSA rules, there are nuances to how benefits are paid. And this is a classic example. And just remember, as attractive as taking 6 months of retroactive benefits may sound, it also means your monthly amount would be reduced by about 4% for the rest of your life.

As you contemplate

when you should claim your Social Security retirement benefits, you should always keep in mind your anticipated life expectancy when making that decision. If you expect to live at least to the “average” life expectancy for those in their mid-60s (about mid-80s for someone your current age), then waiting longer to claim is usually a better long term financial decision (even considering the DRC issue described above). But if your life expectancy is less than “average,” claiming sooner is usually a better choice.

If you have further questions about when to claim Social Security, please contact us at SSadvisor@amacfoundation.org or 1.888.750-2622. There is never a fee for our advisory service because we are a non-profit organization.

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Iran Exposes an Intolerable U.S. Vulnerability

targets. Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, where buildings and radar domes were hit, is just over 60 miles away.

A number of bases have been fully or partly evacuated, and the effects have been felt on U.S. operations. One reason that there was so much strain on the USS Abraham Lincoln during its lengthy deployment is that Bahrain was no longer available as a supply hub. We had to rely on facilities in Diego Garcia and Singapore, creating a supply chain thousands of miles long.

The Iranian missile and drone threat to our bases was foreseeable, and yet we didn’t do enough to protect them. One option now is a broad pullback of our presence in the region. But so long as hydrocarbons power the modern economy, this is a nonstarter. The Gulf states would have an incentive to look elsewhere for strategic partners, most worryingly to Russia or China, and might conclude that they should do more to accommodate an Iran that would have effectively chased us from the Persian Gulf.

The answer to the threat to the bases is the same thing that created the threat in the first place -- innovation. We’ve long had bases in the Gulf, including a naval command headquarters in Bahrain since 1948, but the purpose and the nature of the presence has changed over time. As Kristian Alexander writes in an analysis for the Stimson Center, during the Cold War we didn’t have a large

land presence at bases. After Saddam Hussein’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait, that changed.

Today, the question is how to reconfigure our presence again to make it more defensible and sustainable. “U.S. bases,” Alexander writes, “remain indispensable for intelligence collection, command and control, maritime security, air and missile defense, logistics and long-range power projection.”

One option is to locate more facilities in Israel. Elliott Abrams of the Council on Foreign Relations points out that the Jewish state is much further away -- more than 1,000 miles from Iran --and would impose fewer restrictions on our access and overflight rights.

But we still require bases in the Gulf. We’re going to need to disperse them, harden them (including with more underground elements) and build in more redundancy. The air defense needs to be more robust and layered, and less dependent on expensive missiles that are in short supply.

The war with Iran was supposed to represent a short, sharp defanging of the Iranian regime. Instead, it has dragged on and served as a lesson in key shortcomings of U.S. military power that must be addressed, lest they bite us again in a conflict with a much more powerful adversary.

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

243 Acres Now Protected

**Sacramento Valley
Conservancy
News Release**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - Two new preserves in the greater Rancho Murieta area will permanently protect 243 acres of oak woodlands and grasslands, expanding a network of conserved land in eastern Sacramento County.

Sacramento Valley Conservancy holds permanent conservation easements on the properties, which Westervelt Ecological Services established as habitat mitigation for a development project in Folsom.

The 125-acre Crevis Creek Oak Woodland Preserve adjoins the 4,600-acre Deer Creek Hills Preserve. The 118-acre Golden Hills Preserve protects grasslands that provide foraging habitat

for Swainson’s hawks, a state-listed threatened species.

“These acquisitions represent another important step in our effort to connect and protect contiguous preserves in Sacramento County, and we’re excited to continue working with Westervelt,” said Kelly Hopkins, the conservancy’s executive director.

The Crevis Creek preserve advances the conservancy’s goal of protecting 10,000 acres of blue oak woodlands south of Folsom. Found only in California, blue oak woodlands grow in the lower foothills of the Sierra Nevada and Coast Ranges.

The habitat provides food, nesting sites, shelter and movement corridors for more than 300 vertebrate species and thousands of invertebrates, according to the



The Crevis Creek Oak Woodland Preserve adjoins the Deer Creek Hills Preserve behind Rancho Murieta. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Valley Conservancy

conservancy. The property remains privately owned, with grazing continuing to manage vegetation and maintain its agricultural use.

Golden Hills Preserve helps connect protected lands extending from Van Vleck Ranch to the

northeast toward the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Cosumnes and Gill Ranch preserves to the southwest. Connecting protected areas helps wildlife move between habitats.

Westervelt will own and manage Golden Hills, using grazing to reduce fire risk and control vegetation growth. The preserve protects foraging habitat for Swainson’s hawks as urban expansion reduces the land

available to the birds.

Together, the conservancy and Westervelt have permanently protected more than 1,500 acres in Sacramento County. The partners plan to pursue additional properties to expand and connect protected lands.

“We value our partnership with the Sacramento Valley Conservancy and share their commitment to connecting important natural landscapes throughout

Sacramento County,” said Travis Hemmen, president of Westervelt Ecological Services.

Founded in 1990, Sacramento Valley Conservancy is a nonprofit land trust that has protected more than 18,850 acres across the region. Its work includes conserving wildlife habitat, agricultural land and open space, as well as providing opportunities for outdoor education and recreation. ★



The Golden Hills Preserve helps connect protected lands extending from Van Vleck Ranch to the northeast toward the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Cosumnes and Gill Ranch preserves to the southwest. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Valley Conservancy

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SECURITY LOGS

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

Oct. 3
10:57 p.m., Patrol observed an unauthorized food vendor at the bus stop on Murieta Drive between Chevron and Tractor Supply. The vendor, who had been reported by local businesses the previous day, refused to leave when advised. Several subjects associated with the vendor approached the patrol vehicle multiple times. Dispatch contacted SSD for assistances. Due to a high call volume and the

low priority of the incident, SSD advised patrol to clear the area.

Oct. 4
12:04 a.m., Disturbance, Topspin Way, reporting party reported loud yelling and a possible altercation at a neighbor’s residence. Patrol responded and heard several individuals in the back yard. Patrol remained in the area until the disturbance ceased.
2:19 a.m., Trespassing, a guest vehicle entered the community after being refused entry. Patrol located the vehicle and contacted the resident passenger. He stated that the driver was picking him up. Patrol escorted the vehicle back to the North Gate.
4:53 p.m., Trespassing, bus stop on Murieta Drive. The taco stand was

blocking the bus stop. After the vendor was advised of vending regulations and was asked to leave, he complied without incident.
5:57 p.m., Fire. Patrol responded to a report of smoke and locate three juveniles extinguishing a fire about 150 to 200 meters downstream from Granlees Dam. Patrol observed that the fire was out. The group left the area.
6 p.m., Parking, Reynosa Drive. Patrol responded to a report of a vehicle parked for an extended period with signs of someone living inside. Patrol attempted to contact the associated resident and left a voice-mail regarding a possible camping guest and vehicle storage violation.
9 : 0 6 p . m . ,

Miscellaneous. Patrol located the same street vendor from an earlier incident operating near the fire station. He was advised of vending regulations, and he refused to leave. SSD was notified at 7:20 p.m., and arrived at 8:30 p.m. At approximately 9 p.m. the vendor began packing up.
11:16 p.m., Trespassing. Patrol contacted the same vendor. The vendor refused to comply stating that patrol was not law enforcement. SSD was notified and had responded to two previous calls involving the same vendor that day.
Oct. 5
6:55 p.m. Miscellaneous. Patrol provided traffic control while a tractor-trailer loaded a resident’s vehicle for out-of-state transport. Patrol then escorted the

loaded truck through Murieta South to safely merge onto Jackson Road.
Oct. 7
9:53 p.m., Assist Other Agency. RMA requested patrol to assist in serving a trespass notice to the individual whose vehicle had been observed parked in the area. Upon arrival, both agencies were unable to locate the driver of the red Chevrolet Astro van.
Oct. 8
6:34 p.m., Disabled Vehicle. Guadalupe Drive, Report of a disabled semi-truck blocking traffic due to trailer brake issues. A mobile mechanic responded and completed repairs.
Oct. 9
11:32 p.m., Trespassing, patrol located a group in

and around the restroom near the 14th Tee. After subjects were advised the area was closed, they left.
Oct. 11
6:38 p.m., Gate Arm Incident. The South Gate reported a motorcycle striking the inner resident lane gate arm and entering Murieta South without stopping. A camera review shows two motorcycles approaching the lane. The first entered using a resident barcode. The second, possibly a guest, followed closely behind. The gate arm lowered and struck the front of the second motorcycle. The rider continued into the community without stopping. The license plate couldn’t be obtained. Although the gate arm was dislodged from its bracket, it was successfully reinstalled. ★



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Are You Winter Weather Ready?



Review your emergency plan and supplies, including clearing leaves and debris from gutters, drainage areas and storm drains around your home. Photo by 123switch via Pixabay

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - As we enjoy the cooler weather that comes with fall, it’s a great time to start preparing for what the next season will bring. This year, Sacramento County’s partners at the National Weather Services are expecting a strong El Nino year, which means the potential for heavy rain, flooding and the issues that come with the weather.

Seasonal forecasts cannot predict exactly when or where the most significant storms will occur, which is why it’s important for everyone in the County to be ready for this winter. The best approach is to prepare now and stay informed as local conditions can quickly change.

Here is a list of what you can do now:
Sign up for emergency alerts. Emergency alerts provide emergency information, including severe weather, flooding and evacuation notifications. Residents can add phone numbers, email addresses and addresses to receive alerts relevant to their area.

Review your emergency plan and supplies. Make sure your household has an emergency kit with food, water, flashlights, batteries, first-aid supplies and other essentials. Consider your family’s needs, including medications, medical devices, pets and other items that may require special planning.

Check your property before the rain arrives. Clear leaves and debris from gutters, drainage areas and storm drains

around your home. If you see a plugged storm drain or other drainage problem, call 311.

Consider flood insurance. New flood insurance policies typically have a 30-day waiting period before coverage begins, so don’t wait until a storm is approaching to purchase a policy.

Know your flood risk. Even properties outside mapped high-risk flood areas can experience flooding. Review your property’s flood risk and know where you would go if you needed to move to higher ground.

What we are doing ahead of the winter to keep all of us safe:

Sacramento County’s Office of Emergency Services (OES) works year-round to prepare for emergencies, including winter storms and flooding. This winter, OES is strengthening emergency operations through training and exercises, improving alert and warning systems, and preparing resources and staffing for potential shelter operations. The County also continues to coordinate with local jurisdictions and emergency response partners, update emergency plans and provide preparedness information to the public. We also regularly meet with and receive updates from NWS.

When we stay prepared, we can all remain calm and take needed steps during an emergency – weather it’s flooding, power outages or other disasters.

To check out additional resources visit <https://sacramentoready.sacounty.gov/us/en/emergency-alerts-notification-system.html>. ★

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Importance of Plants
Featured at Oct. 27
Garden Club Meeting

The River Valley Garden Club’s Oct. 27 meeting will focus on “The Importance of Plants on Civilization,” with guest speaker Professor Jamie Kneitel, chair of the Department of Environmental Studies at California State University, Sacramento. Kneitel will discuss the impact of plants on civilization. Guests are welcome, and the first meeting is

free for new attendees. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for a social hour, refreshments and a raffle, with the business meeting and presentation beginning at 7 p.m. The meeting takes place at the RMA Building.

Halloween Golf Cart
Trunk-or-Treat Planned

A Halloween Golf Cart Trunk-or-Treat event will be held Friday, Oct. 30, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Rancho Murieta Country Club, 7000 Alameda Drive. The entire

Rancho Murieta community is invited to participate, with all ages welcome to join in the Halloween fun. Participants are encouraged to decorate their golf carts, dress in costumes and bring candy to share with trick-or-treaters. The event will feature candy, costumes, movies and other Halloween activities.

Village Christmas Craft
Faire set for Nov. 7

The Rancho Murieta Village Social Club will sponsor its annual Christmas Craft Faire

and Bake Sale on Saturday, Nov. 7, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Village Clubhouse, 14751 Poncho Conde Circle. The event will feature arts and crafts, wreaths, plants, photography, candy, jewelry and other items, offering visitors an opportunity to shop for holiday gifts. Baked goods and hot dogs also will be available.

VFW Slates Poppy
sales, Memorial Day
Celebration

The Rancho Murieta Post

of Veterans of Foreign Wars is planning a Poppy Sales event on May 23 and a Memorial Day Celebration on May 25. The poppy sales will be distributed outside Bel Air Market and Tractor Supply between noon and 3 p.m. The donations will help veterans in our community with emergency monetary needs. The Memorial Day Celebration on May 25 will be held at the Gazebo at 1 p.m. It will be preceded by a social hour at noon. All are welcome. ★

Committee Mulls Lake Use

By Gail Bullen

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- The Rancho Murieta Community Services District Improvements Committee agreed Oct. 7 to bring a proposal to the full board for legal advice on using Lake Clementia as a drinking-water source while preserving swimming at the lake.

The agreement followed a sometimes-contentious discussion about how to move the project forward, its potential costs and the district's progress on water planning. The Improvements Committee also received updates on four emergency repairs and learned that the Murieta Equestrian Center culvert project was complete.

The Improvements Committee examines infrastructure and utility issues in depth and reports its findings and recommendations to the full board. It consists of Directors Bill Gere, the chair, and Randy Jenco, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder, the acting director of operations and other district staff.

Clementia
Permitting

Jenco, who requested the Lake Clementia agenda item, said the district needed advice from its water attorney to determine the legal steps before pursuing engineering work or deciding how the water would be used.

“We’ve been talking about this for a year, and nothing’s happened on it yet,” he said. “The place to start is to figure out how to do it. And we need legal advice.”

Jenco described a possible path involving a permit change to allow drinking-water use, followed by state legislation to allow swimming and other body-contact recreation. He said that approach needed to be reviewed by the attorney and emphasized that he did not believe the community would accept losing the lake's recreational use.

Gere said he supported seeking legal advice but wanted a defined scope and a broader understanding of the project, including permitting, treatment, moving water and financing.

“I want to know the entire scope of what’s going to be required and all of the hurdles that we’re going to have to go through before we start sinking a lot of money into it,” he said.

Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder agreed to ask the attorney what work would be required and how many hours it would take. The proposal would then go to the board in open session Oct. 21 for possible authorization and a spending limit.

At the meeting's conclusion, Gere restated the



Photo shows the damage to a spray field main that has since been repaired. Photo courtesy of Rancho Murieta Community Services District

question to be placed on the board agenda: “How do we revise our permits to allow drinking water, but not lose our ability to have body contact?” Wilder confirmed that was the direction she had recorded.

The committee did not approve a conversion project or authorize legal spending.

During opening public comment, Tom Shewchuk thanked the committee for including Lake Clementia on the agenda but urged it to discuss other major water issues every month, including a third water tank, wells, a water audit and whether to pursue an Integrated Water Master Plan or an Urban Water Management Plan.

“Those probably should be regular agenda topics for this meeting ... every month just because they are so important,” he said.

During the Lake Clementia discussion, Shewchuk said the former Water Vision Working Group, which the board dissolved in August, had already prepared questions for the attorney and submitted them to staff in March. He offered to resend them and urged the district to decide among different strategies for the lake, including emergency drought supply, water for future homes or golf course irrigation.

Shewchuk favored emergency backup supply, with swimming restricted during the period when the lake would be used for that purpose. Jenco said state water officials had told the district it could not simply switch body-contact recreation on and off. Shewchuk acknowledged he might have misremembered that discussion.

Developer Bob Keil pointed to an existing district lake management plan that anticipated Lake

Clementia becoming a water-supply lake at full buildout, with recreational uses reduced. He questioned why the district had not moved forward.

Jeff Pearson, representing Rancho Murieta Properties, also urged action, saying the Water Vision group could have helped determine the process and costs. Gere responded that he wanted to know the entire process, its cost and who would pay.

The discussion also exposed disagreement

over financing. Jenco said a previous board decision reserving new water for existing homes created an obstacle to using water augmentation funds for the project. Keil disputed the board's approach, citing district documents describing those fees as supporting water-supply expansion for undeveloped land. The committee did not resolve the funding question.

Rio Oso Concerns

An update on a leaking check valve at the Rio Oso

tank prompted a separate exchange over the urgency of planning the tank's rehabilitation and a third water tank.

Utility Supervisor Corey Carskaddon said replacement valve parts had been ordered and were expected to take about 12 to 13 weeks to arrive. The parts are estimated to cost about \$11,000. Carskaddon said he believed district staff could install them.

Keil asked why the broader Rio Oso tank project was not on the agenda, citing what he described



Photo shows the repair to a water service line on De La Cruz Drive. The final step will be restoring the asphalt. Photo courtesy of Rancho Murieta Community Services District

as a 23-month window before the tank would fail. Gere said the absence of Chief Plant Operator Travis Bohannon and the approaching arrival of a new general manager had affected the discussion, and the project would move toward the top of the list in the next month or two.

Keil urged an earlier public discussion of alternatives. He described a possible approach using pumps and valves to improve pressure without enlarging the Rio Oso tank. Carskaddon said that approach would not provide the stored water capacity needed for fire protection for new homes.

Gere disputed Keil's assertion that Rio Oso had not been discussed, noting earlier committee consideration of failing anodes. The committee made no decision on tank rehabilitation, replacement or a third tank.

Repairs, Culvert
Completion

Carskaddon reported the wastewater treatment plant's backwash pump had been removed and was being handled by a repair company. He said he understood the repairs were done, but staff and engineers were still determining specifications for a protective coating. The initial repair estimate was about \$12,000, with the coating expected to add to the cost.

A water service line leak at 15134 De La Cruz Drive had been repaired by contractor TNT on Sept. 29. The line was buried more than 14 feet deep, beyond the district crew's available excavation equipment. Carskaddon said staff handled other leaks and repairs while the contractor completed the work. An estimate for permanent asphalt restoration was still pending.

Although the agenda packet listed the wastewater spray-field main repair as pending, Carskaddon reported that a contractor had replaced 40 feet of pipe using materials the district had in stock. He said the line was believed to be working, with some backfilling still to be completed by staff. The repair cost was unavailable.

The equestrian center culvert project had been completed two days before the meeting, Carskaddon said. Rails and bolts were in place, and hydroseeding was finished. No final project cost was reported.

Wilder said she planned to bring the emergency repair items to the Oct. 21 board meeting for formal emergency declarations and closure of completed work. The equestrian center culvert emergency would also return to the board to be discontinued. The Rio Oso valve repair would remain open while the district awaited parts. ★

Accounts of Controversy Disputed

Continued from page 1
responses published by the River Valley Times, Gere described his airport roles:

“For seven years, I served as the Airport Business Liaison to the City Council and was later hired as Airport Manager. These roles provided valuable experience in municipal government, budgeting, long-range planning, regulatory compliance, and public safety.”

In his response for this story, Gere said he previously operated an aviation business at the airport for 10 years. Several years after selling it, he said, city leaders asked him to return to manage the airport, where he served from 2004 to 2008.

Gere said he accepted the position after discussions with the city manager and council members about financial reforms needed to address airport deficits, deteriorating buildings and below-market rents.

Competing plans for airport land

The planning dispute involved competing proposals for airport land. CAL FIRE sought to replace its more than 40-year-old air-attack base at the airport with a new base on a different airport parcel, while a private developer proposed a jet center on the same parcel.

A Dec. 21, 2007, article, “Airport Future Up to Council,” described the competing

proposals. CAL FIRE sought part of a 20-acre parcel, while ABVision, a Saratoga-based company, wanted the entire parcel for a jet center.

Gere favored the jet-center proposal, arguing that it could bring jobs and revenue to Hollister. He questioned whether CAL FIRE needed to move to the proposed location and suggested expanding its existing site.

CAL FIRE officials said the proposed location would improve pilots’ visibility of runway traffic and provide room to replace aging facilities. The Dec. 21 article described plans for an aircraft maintenance hangar, operational facilities, pilot quarters and a control tower.

In his response, Gere characterized the proposal as a repair-and-support facility for CAL FIRE ground vehicles. He argued that it would consume the airport’s remaining expansion space and force the city to acquire adjacent developer-owned land for future growth.

Gere said the airport advisory commission’s recommendation did not establish city fiscal policy. He said Quilter oversaw the layout plan update and that the city manager, council leadership, and Gere agreed that the land should be reserved for revenue-generating aviation uses.

At a Dec. 17, 2007, council meeting, three airport commissioners told council members that Gere had removed the proposed

CAL FIRE base from the plan they had recommended, according to the Jan. 23 article, “Airport Manager Placed on Paid Leave.” The council delayed approval after questions arose about the omission.

Gere said Quilter had asked him to meet again with stakeholders before that council meeting and that he presented the staff plan overseen by the city manager.

The airport advisory commission subsequently voted unanimously to restore the CAL FIRE proposal, according to a Jan. 4, 2008, article, “CalFire Back on Plans.” That article also reported Gere’s position at the time that his revisions were not substantial.

Disputes with airport users

The controversy unfolded amid broader disagreements among airport users, business owners and management.

A Dec. 28, 2007, article, “Airport Factions Fight Over Future,” observed: “The only thing that the various factions seem to agree about is that nobody likes the airport manager.”

The same article reported that a petition calling for Gere’s removal garnered 115 signatures, according to Ruth Erickson, president of the Hollister Airmen’s Association. She said it had been presented to the City Council and city manager that fall.

The article also reported Gere’s argument that the airport had enough space to accommodate its different users and that compromise was necessary to advance Hollister’s interests.

In his response, Gere said he had never personally seen the petition, although he did not doubt that one had been circulated. He attributed opposition to disputes over lease enforcement, below-market rents and efforts to expand corporate aviation.

“Turnaround management inevitably creates friction,” Gere wrote.

In a Jan. 11, 2008, letter to the editor published on SanBenito.com, Quest Richlife, owner of the Hollister Gliding Club and a former commuter-airline captain, said he welcomed jets and economic development as long as existing airport users were not pushed out.

He described his interactions with Gere as “truly horrible,” writing: “No Hollister merchant should be subjected to hostile yelling or irrational management decisions as I have been at the airport.”

Gere rejected Richlife’s allegations, saying he maintained professional standards and enforced rules equally among tenants.

Gere also challenged the tone of the earlier coverage, arguing that the three-part airport series and published letters gave undue weight to opponents of his

management.

Leave and departure

The Jan. 23, 2008, article, “Airport Manager Placed on Paid Leave,” reported that Quilter confirmed Gere had been on paid administrative leave since Jan. 17. Quilter declined to confirm whether the leave was related to the layout-plan change. Mayor Doug Emerson also declined to discuss the circumstances.

On Feb. 26, 2008, SanBenito.com reported in “Hollister’s Airport Manager Is Out” that the city had announced Gere was no longer airport manager and would begin searching for a replacement. Gere had held the position for about three years.

The article said it was unclear whether he had been fired or left voluntarily.

Gere said his family’s relocation plans drove his decision to leave. He described his paid leave during his final weeks as a way to lower political tensions and transition his duties.

Asked how his Hollister experience would inform his CSD service, Gere said public leaders must consider community input while weighing available funds, regulations and long-term plans.

“The fundamental lesson from Hollister is one I carry with me today: in any public process, a leader’s duty is to serve the broader community need, not to subsidize special interests,” he wrote. ★

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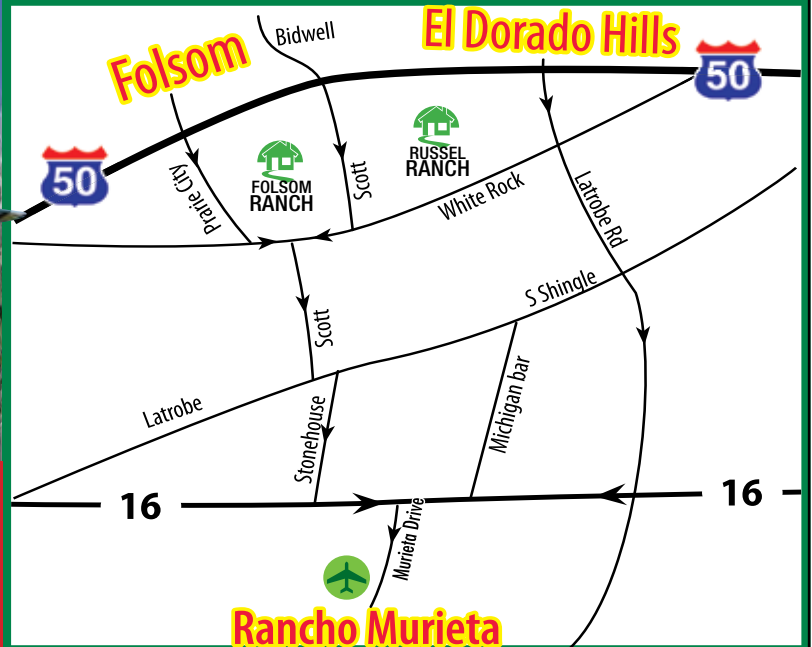
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