

Nipomo CSD may ignore water vote

By Jerry Bunin
Telegram-Tribune

Rather than turn off the tap, Nipomo may overturn the election.

The Nipomo Community Services District has called a special meeting for Tuesday to consider ignoring the Nov. 5 election and continuing to pursue state water.

District officials agreed in advance to abide by the results of the election.

Only 29 percent of the area's 2,324 registered voters participated in the election; they opposed state water by a slim 24-vote margin, 349 to 324.

The meeting was scheduled after State Water Project supporters began lobbying the district board of directors to reject the election because of the small voter turnout and because project opponents allegedly misled voters.

An opponent accused supporters of stretching the truth and ignoring democratic principles.

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If Shaw says it's legal, district General Manager W. Ryder Ray said Thursday, the board will still have to decide if it's political sound.

"I would hate to override the vote," board member Katie Fairbanks said Thursday. "I would also hate to let the opportunity for water go by.

"Water is something you can't live without," she said. "We will absolutely need more water" before Nipomo grows to its full potential, 24,000 people.

People asked Wednesday, she said, if board members would be able to ignore the election and still sleep at night.

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State water could cost about \$530 per acre-foot, she said, noting that is far less than the \$1,200 to \$1,600 per acre-foot it would cost to desalt ocean water and ship it to Nipomo, an inland community.

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Nipomo now has the capacity to pump 2,395 acre-feet from its wells. That water costs \$225 per acre-foot, Fairbanks said.

Misinformation about the cost of state water and other water options available to Nipomo played a role in the election, Ray said.

He said most supporters claim a flyer distributed "at the 11th hour" by the Citizens' Planning Alliance "was a deterrent. It had a lot of inaccurate information."

Charles Gulyash, an alliance member involved in distributing the flyer, maintains the information was accurate.

Also, "it was only mailed to one-third of the voters," he said. "To focus on it as the pivotal point that affected the election is questionable.

"What is the point of having an election," asked Gulyash, "if it can be overturned because people don't like the result?"

Gulyash said he doesn't know if he or the alliance will be at Tuesday's meeting. It will begin at 7:30 p.m. in district board room, 148 S. Wilson St., Nipomo.