

NCSD takes issue with documents

By Mike Hodgson/Associate Editor

The Nipomo Community Services District will forward comments on a number of issues - including customer privacy and the use of the word "overdraft" - with proposed county documents to the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors for a hearing this week.

Directors raised concerns on the documents last week, and the Board of Supervisors is scheduled to hold a hearing Tuesday afternoon on the documents - amendments to the County Code - requiring retrofitting plumbing fixtures in existing properties before they are sold and by developers in new projects

Also slated for a hearing Tuesday is the county's Annual Resource Summary Report that looks at water and sewer capacities.

NCSD directors were particularly concerned about a part of the retrofit program that would require water purveyors to provide the county with information on individuals' water use before and after retrofitting with low-flow fixtures.

Director Ed Eby noted the plan would ask the district to release customer information to the county "to do who knows what with," and then that information would become public.

Legal counsel Jon Seitz noted the county wants the information to determine if retrofitting is reducing water use.

"Would (the information) drop away once they convince themselves?" asked Director Clifford Trotter.

"I have no idea," Seitz responded, noting the issue was raised with the county and the district could provide only generic information without identifying the specific customers.

Board President Mike Winn also objected to the county's proposal to allow property owners to pay an in-lieu fee rather than retrofitting their fixtures.

He said the problem is that an in-lieu fee is too attractive to county government, which needs revenue and might allow owners to pay the fee rather than retrofit.

But Seitz said funds from the in-lieu fee are scheduled to be returned to the district for its retrofit rebate program.

Winn said historical properties - such as the Dana Adobe - should be exempt from installing 21st-century fixtures or paying the fee.

Seitz agreed, noting there also should be exemptions for structures where new toilets won't fit within the structure and where they would not provide adequate access for the handicapped.

Winn also expressed concern that developers might be able to skirt the requirements when agricultural land is converted to homes by claiming a historical water use or by retrofitting to offset the new homes' water use but using previous agricultural water volumes for landscaping.

Regarding the water and sewer supply updates, General Manager Bruce Buel expressed concern about a lack of severity level indicated for Nipomo's water system.

He said the report also indicates there is a problem with the district's sewage treatment system.

“We do have a problem, but I believe it can be remedied in a reasonable amount of time,” he said.

Eby and Director Larry Vierheilig agreed the word “overdraft” should

be replaced with “consumption is

exceeding safe yield” when referring to the groundwater basin.

And they objected to wording that said water could “run out” in as little as two years, preferring the report say the supply “could be in jeopardy” in that time.

Winn also asked that the district's sewage capacity figures be updated in the report.

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