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# Water District Costs Stuns Tract Residents

It's going to cost Vienna Woods-Park Wilshire residents twice as much to join Soquel Creek County Water District as they were told it would a year and a half ago.

New estimates just received by the Vienna Woods-Park Wilshire Homeowners Assn. from the water district show the connection cost at \$528 per residence. The first figure was \$265.

O'Brien Riordan of the homeowners group said he was "disappointed that an experienced and reputable water engineer" such as Bob Johnson, Soquel Creek manager, could have made an original estimate so far out of line with the real cost.

It has caused some officials of the homeowners group to question the wisdom of joining Soquel Creek. They think there may be a cheaper way to solve their water shortage problem.

"The problem," Riordan observed, "is that we're coming against the end of another agreement on July 1, and where do we go from here?"

The current agreement by which Soquel Creek provides the Vienna Woods community with water through a temporary connection will expire on that date, just as the summer dry season gets into high gear.

Soquel Creek has served notice it doesn't like the temporary hook-up and has renewed the connection agreement only with great reluctance in the past.

If Vienna Woods indicates it won't annex to the water district because of the higher cost estimate, Soquel Creek just might chop off the temporary connection on July 1.

If it does, Vienna Woods-Park Wilshire is going to be thirsty. The community's three decrepit wells — one of which on longer functions — supply about one-fifth the area's summertime water needs.

Another factor giving the community pause in the decision to annex to Soquel Creek is the water district's proposal to sell a \$5-million bond to finance district improvement and new water sources.

"We would have to be a part of it (the bond issue) as a condition of becoming a part of Soquel Creek," Riordan pointed out.

The homeowners group also is wondering about whether it is going to wind up financing future expansion for Soquel

Creek. Riordan pointed out there is concern that the community will contribute its existing water system and land — as well as buying an oversized connection line to Soquel Creek — so the water district can provide service to adjacent development.

He noted the proposed contract with the district holds no provision for a pay-back to the community for its contribution in the event the district uses the facilities to provide service to another area.

He pointed out a realtor already has approached Soquel Creek about the availability of water for development of the 150-acre Koch property to the west of Vienna Woods.

"Perhaps the majority of homeowners, after all these years of water shortage and frustration and on top of unhappy dealings with county government, still will want to go with Soquel Creek. But we will have to find out what the total bill is. We've already paid \$525 apiece on a previous system. And there is the bond to consider. We may wind up with a gold plated water system."

Riordan said a public meeting will be held shortly to allow the homeowners to decide what they are going to do. They could form a mutual water company in which they all would be partners. But the history of mutual water companies in this vicinity, Riordan said, "is not anything to make us cheerful."

Or, the community could elect to stay under county jurisdiction and just drill a deep well.

Riordan noted that nearby Cabrillo College recently drilled a well at a cost of \$25,000 and it has proved to be a big producer.

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