

Final hearing set on water connection ban

By BILL AKERS

Anticipating another large crowd at next Monday's public hearing on the proposed moratorium in the Soquel Creek County Water District, district officials have reserved a large room to accommodate it.

The hearing — the second and last on the moratorium — will be held at Good Shepherd School, 2727 Mattison Lane in Live Oak, beginning at 7:30 p.m. The school was chosen as the location for the hearing — at which the board will take no action — after meeting rooms at Soquel High School and Cabrillo College proved unavailable.

And, unlike the first hearing held on Oct. 20, audience members will be allowed to ask questions of the directors. It was a ruling in the first hearing that the directors and district staff would only hear testimony and not field questions that led to the second hearing. And at a business meeting Monday night, directors altered their edict that all the questions at the next hearing must be submitted in writing by agreeing they would also field questions from the floor.

"That's what we're here for — to answer questions," Director Dan Kriege said Monday night, and his fellow directors concurred.

And District Manager Bob Johnson told the board there would be a public address system at the hearing, the lack of which led to difficulties at the Oct. 20 hearing.

Although the directors will take no direct action on the proposed moratorium after the hearing, they will decide what the timetable will be for action.

Discussing this with staff members and district legal counsel Bob Bosso Monday night, it appears the directors will adjourn the hearing to a special meeting to be held Nov. 10 or soon after, to decide what course of action to take.

At that special meeting, they are expected to tell Johnson and Bosso what kind of ordinance to draw up outlining the form the moratorium and the restrictions on water use will take. Once the wording of the ordinance is known, Bosso told the directors, Johnson can then proceed to file an environmental assessment, as required by law. This will probably be a "negative declaration" which indicates the moratorium will not have a negative impact on the environment.

In their discussions Monday night, directors indicated they will consider the ordinance in its final form at their Dec. 1

meeting, at which it will be adopted.

But Bosso had a word of caution for the directors: "I can guarantee you this ordinance is going to be litigated. Someone (who opposes the moratorium) will come along and nit-pick it, and decide to take it into court."

(The water district board will also meet on Nov. 17, but at this point this is expected to be only a business meeting and not deal with the moratorium.)

The board also got its first look at the final form of the report which triggered the series of events which will probably lead to the moratorium. This is the study by the U. S. Geological Survey which revealed about a year ago that the underground water supply in the Purisma Formation — which underlies most of the midcounty — is being overdrafted and that there

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is salt water intrusion in the shallow wells in the vicinity of Capitola.

Although this final report says the overdraft is in the neighborhood of 1,000 acre feet a year, this figure is based on a 1970 cut-off date. Johnson says that when those figures are carried forward to the present, the overdraft is 1,600 acre feet a year as indicated in the report's original draft.

Citing the salt water intrusion in the shallow wells (one to 100 feet deep), the report says, "It is unknown how long it will take seawater to intrude the inland parts of the deeper zones — if indeed it ever does."

"It will depend on how carefully pumping, with its effect on the fresh water head, is managed."

(The "fresh water head" is the interface between the outflowing fresh water — which flows into the bay from the Purisma Formation — and the incoming sea water.)

"If fresh water head is reduced, sea water will move inland. If it reaches the deeper wells, sea water will be pumped," the report concludes.

It is to reduce the amount of water being pumped from the underground until supplemental surface water sources can be developed, that the moratorium on new connections, along with conservation measures, is being considered. The district is currently proceeding with plans to build a "diversion" dam on Soquel Creek to capture winter runoff, but this is five years and about \$6-7 million away. Long-range plans call

for construction of a \$20 million (in today's dollars) dam on upper Soquel Creek in the Glenwood area.

The final USGS report has not been printed, but a proof copy is available at the water district office for viewing. When printed, the USGS says copies of the report will be available to the public at its Ralston, Virginia and Menlo Park offices. (The Soquel Creek water district is also expected to have a copy or copies on hand for the public to see.)

In other business Monday night, directors:

—Accepted the applications for service of three projects. These included the Marani subdivision of 44 units near Deer Park, the 6-townhouse Capitola Terrace project and 27-unit Seascape project on Sumner Avenue. By "accepting" the applications, the directors send letters to the developers saying they will be given water if and when the projects are built if the water and the means to deliver it are available.

These items were not on the meeting agenda, but it was explained they had been left off due to staff error.

—Accepted the audit report by certified public accountant Loren Kallevig who told directors the district's finances are in order.

—Accepted the bid of Maggiora Brothers of \$35,890 for drilling the Opal Cliffs Well. Although there was only one bidder, the staff recommended its acceptance. The engineers' estimate for the job was \$34,940.