

# Mid-summer will tell story on where water's coming from

By BILL AKERS

If, by the end of this year, the Soquel Creek County Water District hasn't found a firm handle on new sources of water, then directors would begin talking about a moratorium on new connections. However, they expect to have solid information by mid-summer on how good the prospects are and, before 1981 rolls around, will have firm plans for developing the new sources.

Those were some of the comments made during a discussion Tuesday night on the application by the H. C. Perry Co. for a promise of water service for their huge 490-unit development proposed for the O'Neill Ranch property in Soquel. The development was "accepted for service" by the directors in a pro forma action that was something less than a promise to deliver.

What the directors did was to agree to send the developers a copy of a newly-adopted policy statement which acknowledges that the development lies within the district's service area, and, given present conditions, water service would be provided.

But to obtain it, the developer must, at his own expense, build whatever pipelines, reservoirs or other facilities the district deems necessary. And, if it is found out there isn't an adequate supply of water to serve the project and still maintain service to existing customers, the service may be denied.

The directors took the action to satisfy a Santa Cruz County Planning Department requirement that developers

prove they have proven water service before they can get in line for a county building permit.

The directors also ordered a letter be sent to the county asking that they not require developers to obtain an agreement for a water supply before getting into the planning process, but make it a condition attached to the building permit.

The letter, which is also being sent to the city of Capitola, Regional Coastal Commission and Board of Supervisors, outlines the district's present water problems and its plans for developing new water sources. "It is anticipated that we will have firm plans for the development of a future source of water supply to eliminate the overdraft of the groundwater basin prior to 1981," the letter states.

District officials say they have a cushion of 3 to 5 years based on present rates of growth, to develop new sources, but if the demand gets too great, "requests for additional demands upon the system will be denied and any necessary limitations on the existing demand will be made until a supplemental source of water supply is obtained."

Complicating the O'Neill Ranch project, in addition to its size, is the fact that part of the property lies within the city of Santa Cruz' water service area, part in the Soquel District service area, and a major portion of it in neither.

Attorney Lloyd Williams, representing the O'Neill developers, said what they needed to know is if the Soquel District would annex the project or if the developers should apply to Santa Cruz for service.

It was pointed out during the discussion that it has been

agreed between the Soquel District and Santa Cruz that the area in question would be annexed by the Soquel District.

During the discussion directors were questioned by three audience members about what it was they were promising the developers.

Mrs. Dana Thompson, candidate for First District Supervisor, asked if the district had determined what the limits of service it could provide were.

District Engineer-manager Bob Johnson said this was spelled out in the district's 1976 master plan which was based on the ultimate land use within the district's service area.

Anna Jean Cummings, chairman of Save Soquel, and Soquel Highlands resident Dick Johnson, also questioned the directors about what they were promising developers and what they were doing about the overdraft of the present water supply.

Directors said that no development will be served at the expense of existing customers, and that they are now studying ways to relieve the demand on the underground supply. These include taking winter surplus water from Soquel and Aptos Creeks, and contracting with the city of Santa Cruz for its

winter surplus water. In this way, it was explained, pumping from the underground could be virtually eliminated during the winter, thus correcting the present overdraft.

But Director Dan Kriege warned, "If something doesn't come around fairly soon to

firm up our supply, no one on this board is afraid to think about a moratorium (on new connections) until something gets done."

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REFERENCE

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