

Water Supply

# Angry residents accuse water board of mismanaging funds; ask for audit

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**BOULDER CREEK** — About 30 angry residents demanded a full accounting from the San Lorenzo Water Board Monday during a public hearing called to consider a \$10 surcharge on bi-monthly water bills to finance 1982 storm damage repairs.

During the hearing, residents accused the board of mismanaging funds.

Several said they were tired of hearing about 1982 storm damage and wanted to know when 1983 storm damage repairs would begin.

Others said they felt the surcharge was a tactic to replace funds used to buy new furniture for the district office, rather than finance the storm repairs.

Jacob Desch of Bear Creek Estates said his bills, \$45 a month for sewer and \$56 bi-monthly for water, were already too high.

The surcharge, suggested to the board by Comptroller Elizabeth

Langdon, was intended as a temporary measure because the district had not yet received funds from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, for the repairs. Langdon had told the board that since the district had not yet received these funds, a cash flow problem had been created.

Acting manager Al Haynes explained that FEMA had threatened to withhold funds if repairs within the district did not follow old guidelines.

For example, Haynes mentioned one road and water line that needed repair. He said the district had wanted to move the water line, but that FEMA would not fund the project unless it were repaired the same as it stood before the storms.

Residents asked board members why they would allow the situation to go on for two years without letting district residents know. They said they thought 1982 repairs had, in most cases, been completed.

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ing about 1982 storm damage repairs and said they wanted to know when 1983 storm repairs would begin.

Many accused the board of mismanaging funds.

"I feel betrayed that something can go on for two years and I don't know about it. What's worse, you don't know about it," Desch said. "You are the people we have elected to look out for our interests."

Mary Kelly, board member, responded by saying, "This district has been under poor management. I hope it's one thing that can be rectified when we hire a new manager."

The residents stood to defend former Water District Manager Ed Steffani, accusing the board of trying to hang their mistakes on someone who wasn't there to defend himself.

The public hearing was continued until Nov. 21 when several questions from the residents could not be answered because the comptroller did not have her records on past expenditures at the meeting.