

## Board votes to continue to study water rate structure for non-assessed customers

The Board of Directors for the Bella Vista Water District on Aug. 23, 2010 once again discussed the issue of whether it would be legal to charge customers that do not pay the District's special assessment fee higher water rates than are charged to those who do pay the assessment. The issue first came up at this year's water rate hearing on April 26, when Simpson University, Shasta College, the McConnell Foundation and two elementary school districts hired an attorney to protest the District's plan to charge them higher rates for their water to make up for the fact that they do not pay the special assessment fee. At that time, the District backed down and agreed to charge the non-profits the same rates for water as its other customers. In doing so, it had to absorb the loss of the \$50,000 in revenue that would have come from charging

the higher rates.

Since then, the District's attorney John Kenney has been investigating the legality of the issue, but because most water districts do not have a special assessment fee, there is virtually no case law on the subject. Director Bob Nash said he would like to see the District pursue the matter, even though Kenney said he thought there was a strong likelihood of a legal challenge by their opponents. General Manager David Coxey suggested that the Board set a limit on the amount to be spent on the issue, most of which would go to Kenney for further investigation. Bob Nash moved to spend up to \$7000 on the matter, and Directors Robert Sims and Lynette Blaisdell voted with him, while Jeff Steppat abstained out of concern for the District's budget. Director Jeff Thompson was absent.

The General Manager reported that he is still negotiating with the Enterprise School District about the need to have them install a \$9000 eight-inch backflow prevention device on the cross-connection line by which the District will provide emergency fire protection water for the new gymnasium at Boulder Creek School. The school district has balked at what they apparently consider an extra expense and has asked the water district to donate the materials. Coxey told the Board that the District already owns such a device and that it is currently sitting unused in the yard. He suggested that it could be sold to the school district at a reduced price if the Board approved doing so. After several Board members said that sounded like a generous offer, the Board voted to offer the backflow device to the Enterprise School District for approximately \$3600.

## Elk Trail Water

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Lees said he didn't think so, but warned that it is sometimes difficult to predict what the State Legislature will do. Brenda Haynes, field representative for Assemblyman Jim Nielson, said that the \$400,000 planning grant was "at the top of the pile" and would be paid out as soon as the budget was signed.

Another discussion that took place at the meeting centered on the choice offered to residents who have reliable wells and do not want to hook up to the water system that is

expected to be approved by a majority of their neighbors. So that these residents won't have to pay the full cost for a water system from which they will gain only fire suppression benefits, the DPW has offered them the choice (Option B) of paying only \$510 per year. Eight of the 198 property owners signed up for that option.

One resident asked how the DPW had come up with cost for the Option B, which is 67 percent of the total. PACE Civil, Inc. engineer Paul Reuter explained that he had de-

termined the Option B costs by deducting the expenses for the water treatment plant upgrade from the total project, since those who chose Option B would receive no benefit from having the water treated. Minturn said that while he believed the method for determining the costs for Option B were fair and equitable, it did not look like a very good deal for property owners, and he urged all those who had selected it to change over to Option A. He said they have until the ballots are tallied on Oct. 12 to make that choice.



Photo by Sharyn Cornelius

John and Duveen Elam of the "E-String Band" play a number for Whitmore's new Senior Club at the group's first meeting on Aug. 28, 2010.

## Whitmore launches new club for seniors

Whitmore's new Senior Club got off to a good start on Aug. 28, 2010 when 30 people braved the unseasonably cold weather to attend the first meeting at the Community Center.

The brainchild of Bob Scheide and John Elam, the new group plans to meet on the last Saturday

of each month.

Everyone who attended the first meeting was invited to fill out a questionnaire containing possible future activities for the group.

Last Saturday, entertainment was provided by John and Duveen Elam's band the "E-Strings." Some of

those in attendance took advantage of the large collection of board games available, but most just seemed to enjoy the chance to visit with friends.

The next meeting of the Whitmore Senior Club will be at 7:00 p.m. on Sept. 25 and may include a talent show.

## Dry Creek Station

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inside, those outside had to stop putting water on the fire because to do so would risk causing steam burns to their comrades underneath the fire.

The interior attack team soon realized that they were up against a formidable obstacle—the ceiling in the lounge consisted of one-inch tongue-and-groove boards installed above the beams. There was no way they could quickly pull it down to get at the fire. They had to retreat for their own safety.

Smith said their next attempt came in the restaurant side of the building where they did manage to break

through the ceiling. But by then the fire in the attic was so hot it exploded through the roof above the restaurant, making it too dangerous for anyone to remain inside. "That fire ran the whole length of the building inside the attic," Smith said.

Forced to let the fire burn itself out, firefighters sprayed water on it from the outside to keep it from emitting large embers that could land on neighboring roofs or dry fields. Eventually, crews from the City of Redding used their ladder truck to apply water to fire from above, putting it out.

In the end, Chief Smith was philosophical. "We

didn't have any injuries on this fire, just lots of frustration," he said "But considering the difficulties we faced, we actually had a pretty good save. The fire didn't burn the office or the food storage area, and most of the alcohol in the bar survived, too."

Dry Creek Station owner Jeff Miller has said that the bar and restaurant were insured, and he plans to rebuild as soon as possible.

Smith said that the Bella Vista fire company is already making plans to hold a fundraiser to help out the restaurant's employees. He promised to let us know as soon as they set a date.

## FERC

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she will relay that issue to their legal staff.

Many of the Whitmore residents who spoke said they feared that the loss of the Kilarc Fore Bay recreation area would mean financial loss for the community. Jeff Dresen, owner of the Whitmore Store, said that quite a bit of his revenue comes from folks heading up to Kilarc to go fishing who stop to buy gas, ice and groceries. Lynette Gooch, owner of Tuscan Heights Lavender Farm below the Kilarc reservoir, told the FERC team that she and her husband had invested every dime in their place and "if we lose our water, we would lose everything." (She and many residents of Fern Road East believe their wells are recharged by seepage from Kilarc Reservoir.) Whitmore Union Elementary School District Superintendent/Principal George DeFillipo said that because the District is now funded by basic aid (local property tax) anything that lowers property values in the community would also harm the school, and he

fears that losing Kilarc could do just that.

Other residents continued to scoff at claims made by the Department of Fish and Game that anadromous fish such as salmon and steelhead can leap up over Whitmore Falls on their spawning run and would therefore benefit from increased water flow in the upper reaches of Old Cow Creek if the Kilarc diversion dam were removed. Ninety-year-old Robert Marx, who was born and raised at Kilarc and fished the reservoir for 75 years, said that in all those years he had "never seen a salmon above the falls." Wildlife biologist Bob Carey explained why. He said that while it is true that salmon and steelhead can jump quite high in the early stages of their spawning runs while they are still in good condition, they do not feed once they enter freshwater streams, in this case the Sacramento River near the Delta, 250 miles from Whitmore Falls. Carey said that any fish that made it as far as Whitmore Falls would be in very poor condition by the time they got there and much too weak

to attempt the 10-foot leap.

Though the FERC team has said several times that they believe their only task is to evaluate the environmental impact of PG&E's decommissioning plans, several speakers told them they can consider other alternatives, such as recommending that the plants be sold to new operators, who could then apply for new licenses. Kelly Sackheim of Davis Hydro, which along with Evergreen Shasta Power seeks to take over operation of the facilities after PG&E surrenders its license for them, reminded the team that when FERC representative T. J. Lovullo had conducted a public meeting on the project in Redding in 2008, he said that FERC could allow PG&E to surrender its license and order it just to "close the door and walk away" provided that a qualified operator was waiting in the wings to relicense the facilities. In this case, there are two potential operators waiting in the wings, and most of the speakers made it clear that they would like FERC to seriously consider the alternatives they have proposed.

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