

Monterey Peninsula Water Authority extends invitations in its first meeting

Mayors' group seeks more input

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A new water organization will invite the Board of Supervisors and two area water agencies to join and offer ideas about how to most efficiently meet its goal: a new water supply for the Peninsula.

Meeting for the first time, the Monterey Peninsula Regional Water Authority agreed to send a letter to the county board, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District and the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency to solicit their input and participation in the nascent organization.

The authority, which held its first official meeting on Thursday at the Sunset Center in Carmel, agreed to form a Technical Advisory Committee that would include representatives of the water agencies, the Monterey Regional Waste Management District and California American Water, as well as an at-large member.

The authority, which includes the mayors of six Peninsula cities, had come under early criticism for a lack of representation for residents in the Peninsula's unincorporated areas, including Carmel Valley and Pebble Beach, and the absence of technical expertise.

But Carmel Mayor Sue McCloud made it clear the authority's focus must be on delivering a new water supply solution for the Peninsula by the 2017 deadline for full implementation of the state-ordered cutback in pumping from the Carmel River.

"We really need to front-load this (process) with action," McCloud said.

The six Peninsula mayors formed the authority, which was under discussion for some time, after it became clear the Regional Desalination Project was doomed and wouldn't fulfill its promise of delivering a replacement source of water.

After months of mediation between the project partners, Cal Am announced last month that it was withdrawing support for the proposal and informed the state Public Utilities Commission it would propose an alternative project by May 1. The proposal is expected to include a combination of desalination, aquifer storage and recovery, and groundwater recharge elements, and perhaps other alternatives. The water management district and the water pollution control agency are working on aquifer storage and recovery, and groundwater recharge projects, respectively.

The authority's stated goal is to promote a new water supply proposal while offering public representation and a forum for public input. It includes the mayors from Carmel, Del Rey Oaks, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Sand City and Seaside, and is planning to meet twice a month.

Its next meeting is 6 p.m. Feb. 23 at a site to be determined.

Jim Johnson can be reached at jjohnson@montereyherald.com or 753-6753.