

CALIFORNIA SPECIAL DISTRICTS

A Publication of the California Special Districts Association
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California Special Districts Alliance

The California Special Districts Alliance is a collaborative partnership between the California Special Districts Association (CSDA), the CSDA Finance Corporation (CSDAFC), and the Special District Risk Management Authority (SDRMA). These three highly respected statewide organizations join forces to help special districts in California better serve their communities.



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Are You Taking Advantage of All that Membership Brings?

It has been a pleasure to serve as California Special Districts Association President this year. As this is the last issue of *California Special Districts* magazine to include a message from the President in 2023, I wanted to use the space to express my appreciation for the many businesses and professionals who support the mission of CSDA through educational presentations and sponsorships at events, and membership.

CSDA's core in-person events offer special district professionals the opportunity to expand their knowledge in educational sessions (often, business and professional members sharing expertise), network with peers, and meet the exhibitors who provide products and services to special districts.

Event sponsorships heighten attendees' experience at events. Sponsorships help provide keynote speakers, meals and refreshments, and opportunities that facilitate engagement with fellow attendees. As a board president, as well as a frequent attendee, I would like to thank the many sponsors who have stepped up to provide generous support and ongoing participation.

CSDA's endorsed affiliate members have been curated to fit the needs of CSDA special district members. They provide value added benefits and enhanced services for special districts. If you are not familiar with the value-added benefits that come with membership, please accept my invitation to reach out to CSDA to inquire at membership@csda.net.

To the many valuable business members who provide special district services across the state, and are frequent exhibitors and speakers at CSDA events, such as those who attended the Annual Conference & Exhibitor Showcase, thank you for your participation and support. The mutual benefit of membership that brings you access to special districts, and in turn provides access to the services and products you offer, allows our special district members to maximize their effectiveness and achieve their mission.

I'd like to remind our district members that CSDA provides easy access to business members through the Buyers Guide which is accessible to members at csda.net. CSDA works hard to provide impactful member benefits, be sure you are taking advantage of all that is offered!



Elaine Magner, CSDA President

ProDev



CSDA Special District Leadership Academy Conference

Comprehensive Governance Leadership Conferences for Elected and Appointed Directors/Trustees

October 22 - 25, 2023 - Sonoma County (Santa Rosa)

Participate in the Special District Leadership Academy Conference as a first-time attendee and complete all four modules of the Academy during this two and a half-day event. Participate as a returning attendee for all new content each year, including establishing a board culture, campaign contribution prohibitions, public outreach, social media, financial reporting, and more!

This conference content is based on CSDA's Special District Leadership Academy (SDLA) groundbreaking, curriculum-based continuing education program, which

recognizes the necessity for the board and general manager to work closely toward a common goal. SDLA provides the knowledge base to perform essential governance responsibilities and is designed for both new and experienced special district board members.

Completing the first-time track of this conference qualifies for six hours of governance training for the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF) District of Distinction and meets the SDLA requirement for the Certificate in Special District Governance.

jobs

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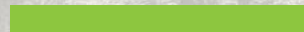
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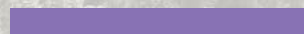
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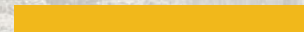
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CSDA News

CSDA Board of Directors Seat C Election Results

The results are in! Congratulations to our incumbents who have all successfully secured another three years on the CSDA Board of Directors. We also welcome new Board Members in our Bay Area and Central Networks.

Northern Network:

Fred Ryness, Director, Burney Water District

Sierra Network:

*Pete Kampa, CSDM, General Manager,
Groveland Community Services District*

Bay Area Network:

Antonio Martinez, Director, Contra Costa Water District

Coastal Network:

Vincent Ferrante, Commissioner, Moss Landing Harbor District

Central Network:

*Curtis Jorritsma, District Manager,
Hilmar County Water District*

Southern Network:

Arlene Schafer, Director, Costa Mesa Sanitary District

2023 CSDA Award Winners Announced

A big congratulations to all of this year's CSDA Annual Award winners! Individuals and districts both received awards acknowledging their achievements in various areas including exceptional public outreach, leadership, and innovations! The awards were presented at this year's CSDA Annual Conference & Exhibitor Showcase held August 28 – 31, 2023 in Monterey.

- 1 Exceptional Public Outreach & Advocacy Award (Large District Category)**
Tahoe City Public Utility District for its Tahoe City Public Utility District Takes Action to Protect Communities from Wildfires
- 2 Exceptional Public Outreach & Advocacy Award (Small District Category)**
Reclamation District No. 1000 for its public relations campaign 4Natomas - Levees. Lift Pumps. Lives. Longevity.
- 3 Innovative Project of the Year Award (Large District Category)**
Orange County Water District and Orange County Sanitation District for their Recycling 100 Percent Local Reclaimable Wastewater Flows into High-Quality Drinking Water
- 4 Innovative Program of the Year Award (Small District Category)**
Camarillo Health Care District for its Adventures in Virtual Reality
- 5 Excellence in Technology Award**
Soquel Creek Water District for Using Innovative Technologies to Ensure a Sustainable Water Supply
- 6 Chapter of the Year Award**
Tuolumne County Special Districts Association
- 7 William Hollingsworth Award of Excellence**
Vincent Ferrante, Moss Landing Harbor District
- 8 Staff Member of the Year Award**
Bridgette Burton, Management Analyst/Board Secretary, Big Bear Area Regional Wastewater Agency
- 9 Board Member of the Year Award**
Charley Wolk was unable to attend. Accepting on his behalf were Fallbrook Public Utility District General Manager Jack Bebee and Board Member Jennifer Demeo.
- 10 General Manager of the Year Award**
Peter J. Kampa, CSDM, Groveland Community Services District
- 11 Ralph Heim Public Outreach & Advocacy Award**
Emily Barnett, Communication Services & Governmental Relations Manager, Central Contra Costa Sanitary District



You Ask We Answer

Questions Appear in CSDA Online Communities

Board Members' Pay

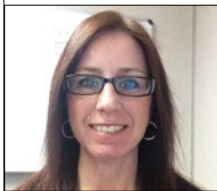
Q: Candi Bingham, General Manager, River Pines Public Utility District

Hello, CalPERS is telling us that our board members should be “employees,” receive W-2’s, and have the appropriate taxes taken out. Their stipends are only \$75 a month. Our CPA has always told me that they are to be given 1099’s. My board members have told me that if they have to pay taxes, they will all resign. We are such a small district; I do not know how we can do this. Is CalPERS correct?



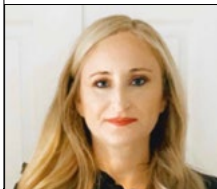
A: LaDawn Allen, Interim Accountant III, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District

Hi Candi, We pay our board members as employees and they receive W-2s. I hope you find a resolution that works. Being a small district does have unique challenges.



A: Kristen Baker, District Bookkeeper, Delano Mosquito Abatement District

Hi Candi, Our Board Members are treated as employees, with Worker’s Compensation and taxes. They receive \$100 minus taxes per month they attend, and we give them W-2’s just as a regular employee gets. We too are a small district; I have been in my current position for just over 2 years and pay has been handled the same way since at least 1995 that I am aware of.



A: Christal Martinez, Executive Director, North Kern – South Tulare Hospital District

Hi Candi, We are a small district as well. We pay our board members as employees. You can remind your board members that they are able to complete their tax withholding paperwork however they would like, which can affect how much they pay in taxes on their checks. At the end of the day, they’re paying taxes on it as a 1099 employee as well, just not until the end of the year.



Engage with your peers
and ask questions on
CSDA's Open Forum
community!

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CSDA Disclaimer: This section is not intended to be legal advice. Members should always seek legal counsel. The information contained here is for general reference purposes only.



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In Review

General Manager Leadership Summit

June 25-27, 2023, Olympic Valley

- 1 Combat veteran Dr. Jannell MacAulay gave the inspiring opening keynote address “Command Your Mindset.”
- 2 Keynote Speaker Pete Blank gave a motivating leadership keynote on “The Magic of Employee Engagement.”
- 3 Representatives from Umpqua Bank (left) and Centrica Business Solutions (right) – thank you for sponsoring golf!
- 4 California CLASS’ Tom Tight presented “Designing a Well-Balanced Liquidity Strategy in the Face of Uncertainty.”
- 5 Attendees enjoy the networking receptions.
- 6 (L-R): CSDA’s Kyle Packham, CalPERS’ Michael Cohen, National Special Districts Coalition’s Cole Arreola-Karr, and CSDA’s Aaron Avery presented on “State of CA Pensions and Latest from Inside our State and Federal Capitols.”
- 7 We appreciate our attendees, sponsors, and exhibitors!
- 8 CSDA’s General Manager Leadership Summit crew hopes everyone had an amazing time!
- 9 S’mores event after reception sponsored by California Class.



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We are always on the lookout for articles and topic ideas.

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Meetings & Events

CSDA Conferences

Special District Leadership Academy

Santa Rosa, October 22 – 25

Board Secretary / Clerk Conference

Monterey, November 6 – 8

Upcoming Workshops

Organizational Development**

October 4-5

The Brown Act in an Endemic World*

October 11-12

HR Boot Camp for Special Districts**

October 18-19

Financial Management for Special Districts**

October 25-26

Workshop: How to Get Started with a DEIB Program

November 6, Seaside

Workshop: Tips for Managing the Records Retention Lifecycle

November 6, Seaside

**Virtual workshop*

***Virtual workshop and part of the Essential Leadership Skills Certificate*

Upcoming Webinars

Best Practices for Board/Staff Roles & Communication

October 10

Ethics AB 1234 Compliance Training

October 17

Sexual Harassment Prevention for Supervisors

October 24

Grant Writing 201

October 31

Sexual Harassment Prevention for Non-Supervisors

November 7

SPANISH Sexual Harassment Prev. for Non-Supervisors

November 7

Guide to New Board Member Orientations

November 14



Go to the CSDA Events Page
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Endure it or Embrace it: How Do You Roll with Change?

By Kristin Withrow, CSDA Communications Specialist

There is a universal truth: Change happens. Relationships evolve, children grow up, technology shifts, co-workers move on, accidents happen. Humans do not remain static, either. Every day is slightly different, from miniscule happenings to unexpected monumental events that turn everything upside down. Your mindset, your reaction, and your attitude are the elements you have control over. To the rest, we must endure or embrace.

The CSDA Board Secretary/Clerk Conference Keynote Speaker this year is Merlyna Valentine, an educator and international public speaker who will be presenting a story of change that inspires audiences to embrace an optimistic, thoughtful mindset in the face of adversity.

“All of us will face some form of adversity that we didn’t choose, and we have to figure out how to move forward, to maintain an outlook that allows us to come out of it better and not bitter.” Merlyna Valentine

The thing about change and adversity is that it’s subjective. Some people naturally bend to situations while others resist in an effort to maintain the status quo. Merlyna’s

life-changing experience left her no choice but to change, and she discovered a resilience along the way that she uses to teach and inspire others. She noted three cornerstones to embrace when change happens: Possibilities, Perseverance, and Perspective.

Sometimes change happens unexpectedly and quickly. When big moments arise, it can be hard to pivot from one reality to the next. According to Merlyna, the first step is to see the possibilities presented by the new landscape that has arrived in your life. “Life is full of possibilities, but they can be disguised as challenges, barriers, even roadblocks,” she said. Develop a mindset that seeks to break through perceived limitations, to seek out creative, innovative solutions that transform stop signs into yield signs. “Proceed with caution, but continue moving forward,” she advised.

Once the possibilities in situations have been envisioned, move into a mindset of perseverance to continue forward in a set direction. “You might not know how strong you are until being strong is your only choice,” she said. People

“All of us will face some form of adversity that we didn’t choose, and we have to figure out how to move forward, to maintain an outlook that allows us to come out of it better and not bitter.”

Merlyna Valentine

have a natural tendency to retreat to a position that is safe and easy, but in a changing situation the building of resilience and perseverance toward an outcome will have better results.

To persevere on the journey, it is critical to consider a fuel supply to build resilience. Merlyna described a ‘resilience account’ like a bank account – to be successful, it needs to have a positive balance. A resilience bank is filled by the moments, people and situations in life that bring joy and passion, and along the way define a sense of purpose. Passion is a catalyst that drives strength and resilience. Merlyna poses a question to her audiences, “If we find what brings us joy, what refuels and re-energizes us, why don’t we do that more often?” These deposits in the resilience bank help us be ready when it is time to make withdrawals.

Underlying all the big P’s that Merlyna has defined in her journey (Possibilities, Perseverance, Perspective), and even some of the lower-case p’s (passion, purpose, process), it is Perspective that underlies it all. In her experience, her perspective shifted once she started focusing on possibilities and knew she would overcome adversity through perseverance. The importance of the P’s leads to another p – it’s personal. Build upon the foundations provided by seeing the Possibilities, building your resilience to Persevere, and maintaining your Perspective before adversity strikes. By understanding yourself and developing your skills in times of success, you’ll have a full bank of resilience and a mindset primed for success to bring yourself through those inevitable times of tumult.

2023 BOARD SECRETARY/CLERK
CONFERENCE



Merlyna Valentine

2023 Board Secretary/Clerk Conference Keynote Speaker

Merlyna is a motivational speaker with a unique story about her journey of perseverance. She helps people learn to embrace change and live life to the fullest. She is the author of ‘Living Life Without Limb-Its: A Story of How to Embrace Change, Persevere Tough Times, and Live Life to the Fullest!’ and the children’s book ‘Daisy the Extra Special Flower.’ Learn more at sherovalentine.net or follow her on Facebook @merlynavalentine or Instagram and Twitter @MerlynaInspires.



Got Governance?

Difficult Conversations: Ethics Complaints Against a Board Member

By Steven Miller, Partner, Hanson Bridgett LLP

Imagine you are the general manager of a community services district. At 9:00 p.m. one evening, you receive an anonymous email, cc'd to the local newspaper and to all board members, that accuses one board member of improperly using district facilities for her personal gain. In short order, you receive phone calls from the board president and the accused board member—who, by the way, are usually on different sides of most issues before the district. You also receive a request under the California Public Records Act from the local newspaper for all emails and other written documents, including on personal

devices, that relate to the subject underlying the anonymous email complaint.

Few issues are as sensitive and disruptive as a complaint lodged against a sitting board member. But complaints and their resolution are usually shrouded in secrecy, without the transparency often necessary to learn any meaningful lessons that could help a district chart a course in the aftermath of a complaint. An ethics complaint may raise legal challenges for a district. But even if a complaint does not allege significant fraud or other criminal behavior, a

complaint alleging board member ethical misconduct presents political and practical challenges that, at a minimum, may cause an enormous distraction from the administration of the district and its important mission.

This short article suggests a framework for how to address a situation like this one. While facts and circumstances of each situation are unique, this framework is designed to help guide you through this process. Even though I am a lawyer, I suggest an approach that is not necessarily guided only by a traditional legal risk assessment.

I suggest that the crucial question to ask yourself at the outset of the process—and then to check in again and again—is how to define success. What is the best or desired outcome from this complaint? This is often not an easy question to answer.

First, of course, you must protect the district legally. A successful outcome must include managing such risk to the district. But from my nearly 20 years of ethics practice, the most common risks I see from situations like this one are not strictly legal. Rather, an often-ignored risk is to a district's culture. A mis-handled ethics complaint could foster a culture of secrecy and mistrust, not only among staff, but critically among the public. If not handled properly, an ethics complaint like this one could lead to increased Public Records Act requests and increased hostility at public meetings. This can create a vicious cycle which only leads to more and more tensions between the district and the public and between the board and staff, more dissension among the board, and less and less staff cohesion. What once might have been a model of a well-run district now demonstrates

with increasing frequency examples of dysfunctional governance. Once the public's trust is lost, it is very difficult to regain.

Avoiding this pitfall is not always easy. District leaders should be guided by transparency and a well-tuned ethical compass. Some practice pointers from my experience:

Closed session discussions should not be the default response. Even when allowed by the Brown Act (and a closed session may not be an option for board discussions of many ethics complaints), holding difficult conversations in public will promote a culture of transparency and may prevent public charges of cover-ups and conspiracy.

Err on the side of independence. When a respondent to an ethics complaint is a board member, it may be very difficult to conduct an internal investigation that will have credibility with the public. Engaging an outside investigator is usually a prudent course of action. Consider making the investigator's written report public.

Support your staff. Pay attention to the impacts of a complaint on your

staff. They may need your protection from angry members of the public and even from intrusive board members.

Use this as an opportunity to refresh district policies. Do you have a Code of Conduct for board members? When was it last updated? Does it include a section on process that will help navigate the response to a complaint? In particular, does it describe options for a board that wants to enforce a finding that a board member has violated the Code of Conduct?

Use this as an opportunity to improve your district's ethical hygiene. I am all in favor of the required AB 1234 training. But training programs specific to your district and your board members may also be helpful. Consider including a standing five minute "Good Governance Hot Topics" item on board meeting agendas to help impart useful information and promote and restore the district's ethical reputation. Develop a curriculum of bespoke training that works for your board and your district.

Steven Miller is the independent ethics investigator/evaluator for the City of Sacramento Ethics Commission and the City of San Jose Board of Fair Campaign and Political Practices (formerly Ethics Commission). He is general counsel to two special districts and advises on ethics, governance, contracts and procurement, and regulatory matters throughout the State. He is a partner with the law firm Hanson Bridgett LLP. You can reach Steven at smiller@hansonbridgett.com.



Get Ready to Navigate the Bumpy Federal Funding Road Ahead

By Cole Arreola-Karr, National Special Districts Coalition Federal Advocacy Director

Finding common ground on the extent of federal government spending and the amount of federal services provided has long been the core of bitter partisan squabbles in Washington. This battle has been on full display in 2023 through the Fiscal Year 2024 federal appropriations process. As this process continues, we know one thing is certain: There will be cuts to federally-supported programs in the coming years.

As the nation's local governments begin to brace for significant reductions in federal funds, it is critical for special districts to prepare themselves for a more competitive grant environment.

The National Special Districts Coalition (NSDC), through its partnership with The Ferguson Group (TFG), is a premiere resource for special districts as they seek to traverse the increasingly rugged federal grants landscape. NSDC/TFG services are designed to reduce the burden many special districts face in their approach to funding opportunities with a variety of professional resources to guide the way.

Educational webinars are among the grant programming benefits CSDA members may access as a benefit of the association's NSDC founding membership. California's special districts are encouraged to access the 2023 NSDC Webinar Series covering grants strategy, advocacy, and earmarks. These recorded webinars have been made available on www.csdanet.net.

Beyond this, CSDA members have access to a range of tools at their disposal to navigate the at-times complicated and overwhelming grants process. These resources are well suited for a range of programming needs and the stages of their development – whether a special district has specific project needs or is just beginning their funding search for potential projects.

Namely, NSDC's premier grants resource was launched in partnership with TFG in January 2022. Entitled the "Project Idea Portal," this platform is designed for NSDC-affiliated special districts to submit information on infrastructure needs or community programming for which funding opportunities are sought. Districts may submit details of their projects via the webform, which TFG's grants team will review and work with the district to identify potential grant and finance opportunities. Within a week of submission, the Grants Team will respond with potential opportunities befitting of the needs, which may include a relevant "General Grants Guide" offering information on a number of authorized federal grants. Special districts may request a meeting with the Grants Team for consultation and further questions.

Special districts utilizing the Project Idea Portal or other NSDC grants services may, but are not obligated to, seek further engagement with TFG's full grant services using a competitive, grandfathered and discounted offer to NSDC members. Information submitted via the Microsoft Form is not shared with third parties.

TFG’s general grant guides offered through NSDC provide a wealth of information on authorized federal grant and financing programs on a range of policy topics including:

- Broadband
- Cybersecurity
- Economic and community development
- Fire protection
- Libraries and museums
- Mental Health
- Parks and Recreation
- Rural development
- Transportation
- Water and wastewater

Each guide includes information on specific programming, examples of successful projects, details of funding requirements such as cost sharing, and contact information for federal agencies implementing the programs.

Furthermore, NSDC members may receive weekly updates on newly opened federal grant opportunities of general interest to special districts. These announcements are regularly provided through NSDC’s state and regional special district associations and organizations. California’s special districts receive this weekly listing directly in their inboxes each Tuesday with *CSDA eNews*.

Finally, CSDA members have access to appropriations and earmark support. Each year, Congress must pass 12 appropriations bills to ensure funding for federal programs. Members of Congress generally begin seeking stakeholder input on federal funding and program needs to effectively represent constituent needs. NSDC and TFG offer information and guidance on the Appropriations process for members as well as with the congressional earmarks program. Earmarks assistance requests may also be submitted via the Project Idea Portal.

The Coalition is excited to continue offering these important resources to California’s special districts providing essential services to tens of millions of Californians.

For more questions or more information, contact Cole Arreola-Karr, NSDC Federal Advocacy Director, at colek@nationalspecialdistricts.org.

The Project Idea Portal can be accessed at www.nationalspecialdistricts.org/advocacy/grants.



MOVERS & SHAKERS



Joanne Yen Le

Congratulations to Coachella Valley Water District's new Director of Environmental Services **Joanne Yen Le**.

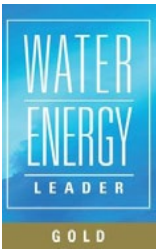
Yen Le comes to the position with broad and extensive experience in environmental services, wastewater programs, drinking water systems, stormwater program management and laboratory leadership.



Adam House

The Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District Board of Directors hosted a momentous swearing-in ceremony welcoming the appointment of

Fire Chief Adam A. House. Chief House will serve as the district's seventh Fire Chief. His selection will succeed the distinguished service of Interim Fire Chief Dan Haverty. Chief House holds the distinction of being the first Fire Chief to serve continuously as a member of Metro Fire since its inception in 2000.



Helix Water District

The Climate Registry has recognized **Helix Water District** as a Water-Energy Leader Gold organization after the district reduced its electric use by 15% and greenhouse gas emissions by 40%. The

Climate Registry made the announcement this month after the University of San Diego's Energy Policy Initiative Center confirmed the district's 2019 and 2021 total greenhouse gas emissions are 40% lower than those in 2009. EPIC's findings were verified by a third party.



Chief Keith McReynolds (left) of North County Fire Protection District welcomes the City of Vista Fire Department's newest **Chief Gerard Washington** (right).

Chief Keith McReynolds (left) of North County Fire Protection District welcomes the City of Vista Fire Department's



San Bernardino Valley CEO/General Manager Heather Dyer, staff, Esri founder and president Jack Dangermond, and Esri team members celebrate receiving the Special Achievement in GIS Award at the 2023 Esri User Conference. Photo credit: Esri

Esri, the global leader in geographic information and intelligence,

presented **San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District** with the Special Achievement in GIS (SAG) Award on July 12, 2023, at the annual Esri User Conference (Esri UC). Selected from hundreds of thousands of users worldwide, San Bernardino Valley received the award for its innovative use of mapping and analytics technology in water resources management.

"San Bernardino Valley is a regional agency tasked with approaching complex problems of today and tomorrow through collaboration, bold leadership, and innovative ideas," said Heather Dyer, San Bernardino Valley CEO/ General Manager. "The GIS technology made available through Esri allows us to make science-based decisions for a resilient water supply and healthy watershed."



Paul Hughes

Congratulations to the new General Manager of South Tahoe Public Utility District, **Paul Hughes**, on his appointment in August. "The Board interviewed

great candidates and unanimously selected Paul Hughes," said David Peterson, Board President. "He is an outstanding leader, outstanding fiscal manager, and outstanding problem solver."

Maximize incentives to accelerate clean energy projects



Special Districts in California face similar challenges in implementing comprehensive energy infrastructure projects. Common barriers often include budget constraints, competing organizational needs, and insufficient staffing.

However, with the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the total project investment can now be offset with direct pay, enabling non-taxable entities to address deferred maintenance, improve energy and operational efficiency, and progress sustainability goals.

- Performance-based contracts can allow public entities to take advantage of incentives without impacting budget.
- American Rescue Plan Act funds can be used in addition to tax incentives available through the IRA and other utility rebates.

Contact: Dan Mitchell
Email: dan.mitchell@centrica.com
Phone: 949-842-6150

centricabusinesssolutions.com

Download our guide to learn how non-taxable organizations can maximize benefits of federal tax credits and deductions available through new provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act.

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WHO WE ARE

Episode 1



Who We Are Campaign

By Vanessa Gonzales, CSDA Communications Specialist & Shelby Golden, CRPD Communication & Marketing Analyst

Cordova Recreation & Park District (CRPD) is an independent special district established in 1958. CRPD proudly serves communities within Sacramento County including the City of Rancho Cordova and the communities of Gold River, Larchmont, Mather, Riviera East, Rosemont East, and additional unincorporated portions of Sacramento County.

Many residents have difficulties understanding which agency might be responsible for various services and whether the service is a function of the city, county, or other local government. Particularly, many residents often assume the City of Rancho Cordova is the service provider for parks and recreation in the area. CRPD's Marketing & Communications staff identified the need to help increase community understanding of their role as the park and recreation service provider in the community. Through discussing community needs with various staff members at multiple locations, community input and CRPD goals, staff identified the need to create a video series and developed content necessary to meet those goals.

Through input received from community outreach, CRPD staff isolated key topics to develop the Who We Are campaign. This campaign features a series of videos which

currently cover topics "Welcome to CRPD!," "What is a Special District?," "Making Cents of it All" and "The People of CRPD." There are additional episodes in the process of being developed where CRPD staff will dive into topics such as park planning, recreation, golf, CRPD Board of Directors, and more. With four episodes currently published, CRPD has received an amazingly positive response from not only the residents, but staff and other agencies as well. The videos have also served as an information reference whether it be on the CRPD website, at community centers or when participating at community events.

As this is a universal struggle for special districts throughout California, staff developed the Who We Are campaign in an effort to help change public perception. CRPD's goal was to help educate the community in a fun and easily understandable way. By developing this campaign, CRPD also strived to increase effective communications with the community. CRPD researched which methods of communication had previously had the highest level of engagement and discovered that videos were gaining much higher viewer rates than stagnant content. Staff invested in select technology to help improve the overall video quality for the campaign. In wanting to

make fun and relatable content, all the videos featured footage of real staff members, program participants, and community members.

To increase viewer rates and create more dynamic and engaging content, CRPD reached out to California Special Districts Association’s Senior Public Affairs Field Coordinator Dane Wadlé as a guest speaker for one of the main videos in the Who We Are series. One of the most pressing questions CRPD receives is “What is a Special District?” In episode 2 of the video series, this question is answered and Wadlé highlights the importance of special districts and how they are a benefit to the community.

Once the videos were finalized, CRPD utilized various social media channels to promote the content and share it with the community. This campaign was published on CRPD’s YouTube channel and Facebook page. In addition, CRPD has shared flyers at various community events and has submitted a handout with relevant QR codes to be handed out to all new residents in Rancho Cordova through the Explore Rancho Cordova program. By providing this information to new residents, staff will be addressing and

improving CRPD’s identity within the greater Rancho Cordova area.

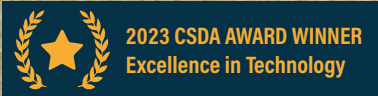
CRPD has seen an increase in overall content engagement since the Who We Are campaign first few episodes have released. Episode 1 was published on November 8, 2022, and had the highest engagement for the entire month of November. This trend continued for the following episodes. CRPD is excited to release additional episodes in this series to further enhance the community’s understanding of the importance of CRPD within the community and the role and services they provide to further elevate the wellbeing of the community. In addition to measuring the success through social media metrics, staff have received verbal acknowledgements and praise from community members, board members and fellow agencies on this campaign.

Check out the videos:

<https://qrco.de/beKOPc>



Solutions & Innovations



Innovative Technology Ensures Sustainable Water Supply for Soquel Creek Water District

By Vanessa Gonzales, CSDA Communications Specialist

Soquel Creek Water District (District), located in Soquel, California, is responsible for providing drinking water to the communities of Aptos, La Selva Beach, Opal Cliffs, Rio Del Mar, Seascape, Soquel, and portions of the City of Capitola. The District relies 100% on groundwater, and unlike most communities in California, they do not receive any state or federal imported water. Their only source of water is locally sourced from the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin, which is one of 21 basins in California that are critically overdrafted and under mandate to be sustainable by 2040. The overdraft has occurred because more water is being pumped out annually than is naturally recharged through rainfall, leaving the area susceptible to seawater intrusion to fill the gap.

Since the 1980's, the District has been aware that seawater intrusion was present in the aquifers at both ends of its operating area. Traditional coastal monitoring wells have been installed to measure water levels and salinity. "We knew we had seawater intrusion creeping inland, but we didn't know how far off the coast the interface was," said District General Manager Ron Duncan. "Our hydrologist warned that if the District did not find a supplemental water supply, we would be in danger of losing our production wells to seawater intrusion, which would destroy the basin water supply."

In 2017, Duncan received a call from a trade ambassador from Denmark. The ambassador indicated there was technology developed that would map the District's freshwater and seawater interface off the coast. Initially,

Duncan dismissed the call as a prank or an exaggerated capability. When the ambassador phoned again, Duncan learned more about the technology's functionality and was intrigued.

After consulting with the City and County of Santa Cruz and Central Water District, Duncan introduced the idea to map the coastline of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA), which oversees the groundwater management activities of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin. The District and the MGA established a plan to test whether the technology could accurately detect the interface where seawater was meeting freshwater and threatening the groundwater basin.

The District contracted with two Danish companies, SkyTEM and Ramboll, to conduct a proof-of-concept study. A geophysical survey would be created using an airborne electromagnetic technology to create a 3-D model of the groundwater basin. Outside of three small trials in Europe, the project was the first instance using the new technology over seawater in the world!

Airborne electromagnetics (AEM) is a geophysical method initially developed to map bodies of ore for the mining industry. It works by measuring variations in the electrical conductivity of the ground. The electrical conductivity of rock and soil depends on its composition and water content.

The SkyTEM helicopter, with what looks like a wide magnetic basket hanging from it, collected measurements to identify where the freshwater and saltwater interface

occurred offshore – essential information used to understand the immediate risk to coastal wells from seawater contamination. Data collected during this survey assisted scientists in mapping groundwater salinity. The survey was conducted in a grid of 15 flight lines parallel to the coastline and 12 lines perpendicular to the coastline. Two of the perpendicular lines in the southeastern part of the survey were extended inland to calibrate against existing monitoring well data that the District collected. The helicopter flew over 300 km and obtained readings 600 ft below the seafloor.


The data showed variations in salinity in the upper 300 feet to a distance of approximately 3,000 feet from the coastline. In layperson’s terms, the AEM mapping and data confirmed that seawater intrusion is imminently threatening the entire service area, and if no action is taken, it will continue to advance and contaminate the District’s drinking water wells and the other wells in the region.

“Scientific data produced by this study confirmed the proof-of-concept and validated the sense of urgency of the water crisis in Santa Cruz County,” noted Carla Christensen, District Board President. “This hardcore evidence inspired additional national and scholarly attention with confirming peer reviews from the Department of the Interior U.S. Geological Survey and Stanford University.”


Using the science and data from the water quality sampling and AEM mapping, the District moved plans forward to develop a new water supply. To combat the threat of seawater intrusion and replenish the basin, the District Board approved the Pure Water Soquel (PWS) project in 2018. PWS will take highly treated wastewater and recycle it by purifying it using state-of-the-art, proven four-step advanced treatment processes including ozone, microfiltration, reverse osmosis, and ultraviolet light with hydrogen peroxide. This high-quality water will be stored in the groundwater basin and will serve as a seawater intrusion barrier to prevent saltwater from intruding further inland. Construction of the project, which will provide a reliable, sustainable, and drought-proof water supply for today and future generations, is anticipated to be complete in 2024.

CSDA is proud to recognize Soquel Creek Water District with the 2023 Excellence in Technology Award for this impressive international partnership and advanced technology achievement.





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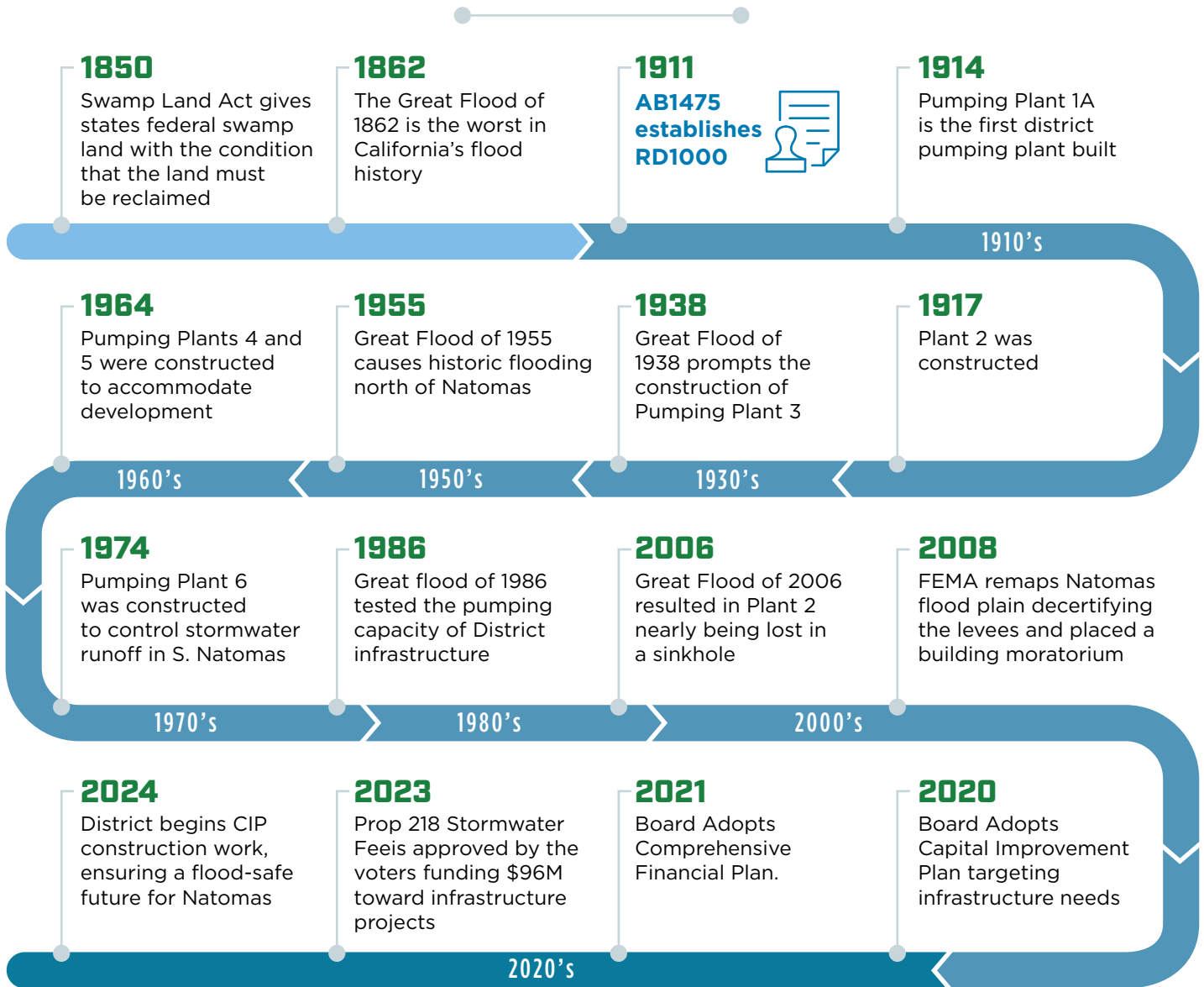
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Maya Angelou



Providing flood protection and public safety to residents, businesses, schools, and agriculture in the Natomas Basin since 1911



Learn More!





Feature



Small District Wins Big

4Natomas - Levees. Lift Pumps. Lives. Longevity.

By Kristin Withrow, CSDA Communications Specialist

When Reclamation District No. 1000 (RD1000) adopted a capital improvement plan identifying critical infrastructure needs to continue to fulfill its mission to keep the neighborhoods and businesses in the Natomas Basin in Sacramento safe from flooding, the district realized the projects and capital assets required were extensive. After a long and detailed process to identify the financial impact of the needed upgrades, it was determined a fee would be necessary. The district knew they needed to bring the public along on the system's upgrade journey to gain their support for the needed Prop 218 Stormwater Fee.

To help the community understand the needs and benefits of the improvements, they developed a robust outreach campaign. The duty to spend public monies with transparency and due diligence is taken seriously by special districts such as RD1000. They knew the first step was to help the residents they serve understand the history, the flood risk, and the projected future risks in the area.

The Sacramento region has been identified as the second-most likely area to experience a catastrophic flood in the United States – just one spot behind New Orleans. With the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 serving as a warning sign in the region, the district needed the public to know of the prediction that their service area would

experience a 'mega-flood' within the next 30 years. Katrina caused an estimated \$161 billion in damage and the loss of over 1800 lives. The dire prediction was coupled with the information that the district's current equipment includes some units that are as much as 100 years old.

The necessary improvements were calculated at a cost of just over \$96 million over thirty years, including massive equipment upgrades for pumps designed to take water away from the interior storm drain system, as well as removal of silt and debris from drainage ditches and canals, and ongoing maintenance, vegetation removal and interior levee controls.

The district also realized it would need to dramatically improve its visibility in the community. Like so many communities, the majority of residents living in the area did not know the district existed. Many were surprised to learn they were living in a flood zone.

Thus, was created the '4Natomas' public awareness campaign designed to introduce the district to its public and provide a communication line to educate everyone in the area of the situation and the identified solutions. The campaign centered around '4' core principles: Levees. Lift Pumps. Lives. Longevity.

continued on page 28...

The goal was to create compelling messages that were easily understood and conveyed the role of the district, the danger of flooding, the importance of protecting against the risk of flooding, and the critical need to replace the antiquated infrastructure.

They created a website for the 4Natomas campaign to provide a landing place of educational information for their outreach materials. They also refreshed their primary website to make it easier to navigate for people who were researching the district or wanting to learn more about its operations.

District staff attended community events, acting as participants and sponsors of booths for jamborees and concerts in the park. They supported the local Fall festival and festive Santa in Natomas event to create brand awareness through sponsorship recognition banners. At every event, they handed out promotional merchandise with their 4Natomas brand logo and a QR code for more information.

They utilized billboards, radio advertising and even movie theater ads. They went on local news stations for interviews about the possibility of floods in the area, and their plan to prevent it. The public relations team created a video capturing the history of the district changing from agricultural to urban environments, the dangers and costs of flooding, their maintenance process, and explained how the vital infrastructure pumped water out of the district's region. They published a series of stories in the local *N Magazine*.

“The first article was about infrastructure projects and CIP Improvements; it also discussed the district's responsibilities in operating and maintaining the interior canal drainage system. Every month we educated the public on how an urban Natomas Basin elevates the flood risk and the essential work by RD1000 to protect even more lives, property, and infrastructure such as the Sacramento International Airport, and California Interstate-5,” said General Manager Kevin King.

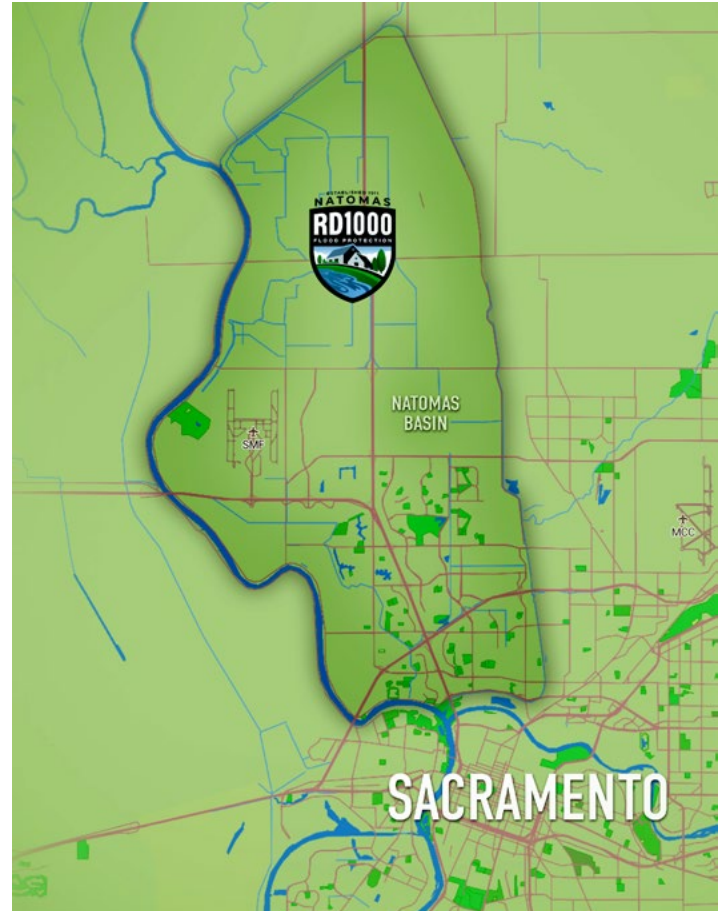
Knowing there was no substitute for meeting people personally, King began hosting regular meetings with the district's Board of Directors and nearby homeowner groups, businesses and elected officials. Meeting by meeting, the District broadcast their message of education and outreach. During the Covid-19 closures, King conducted over 25 Zoom meetings with homeowners associations.

They created a thirty-year flood protection plan that they shared with the community and sought participation to inform the plan.

The District met and garnered the support of Sacramento City Councilmembers; Sacramento County Board Supervisors; CA Assemblymember Kevin McCarty; Congresswoman Doris Matsui, and Congressman Ami Berra. Managers and Board members also met with flood prevention partners: Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) and the Central Valley Flood Protection Board (CVFPB).

At every opportunity, they introduced the new Stormwater Fee they needed to implement to fund the project. The widespread, cohesive message paid off with the support of a \$96 million Prop 218 Stormwater Fee in March of 2023, ensuring a funding source that will enable the district to provide a flood safe future for Natomas for generations to come.

As a result of their impressive efforts, Reclamation District 1000 is the winner of the 2023 CSDA Award for Exceptional Public Outreach and Advocacy by a Small District. Check out their video at <https://youtu.be/k2rmSW0FbLE> to learn more.



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From the Capitol



Assemblymember Gregg Hart Sees Critical Role of Special Districts

Assemblymember Gregg Hart was elected to the California State Assembly in November of 2022 to represent the 37th Assembly District serving Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. His background includes roles in local government such as County Supervisor, City Councilmember and Planning Commissioner. This year, he authored AB 557, a CSDA sponsored bill that would extend the ability of local government to meet remotely under statewide-declared emergency. CSDA caught up with Asm. Hart to ask about his experience in his first term.

The following has been edited for space.

How does your background as a local government official impact your knowledge and understanding of special districts?

Over the years, I have worked closely with my special district colleagues and seen firsthand the critical role special districts serve to improve governance, cost efficiency and the quality of public services.

Santa Barbara County has forged strong, successful partnerships with our special districts, ensuring efficient and quality service delivery that caters to the unique needs

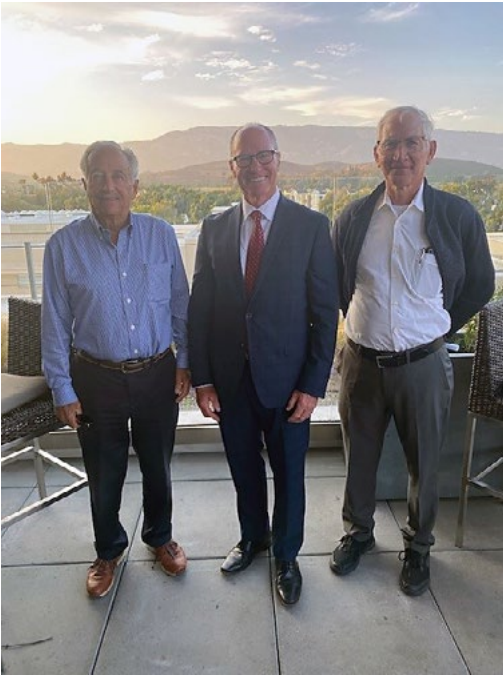
of our residents. This collaboration has been instrumental in delivering essential services such as water supply, fire protection, transportation, and more.

Many special districts are required to work with the Coastal Commission. As a former Coastal Commissioner, what advice do you have for special districts in such collaborations?

The Coastal Commission can be a complex agency to navigate. I recommend becoming familiar with the California Coastal Act. Understanding the goals, policies, and provisions of the Act can provide valuable insights into the Commission's decision-making process.

I encourage special districts that need coastal development permits to engage with the Commission staff and relevant stakeholders as early as possible. Pre-application meetings can be beneficial in understanding the Commission's expectations and requirements, which can help shape your plans accordingly.

The Coastal Commission values public input and involvement. Be prepared to engage with the public, respond to concerns, and demonstrate how your project



Left: Against a beautiful Santa Barbara sunset, Asm. Gregg Hart (center) enjoyed meeting with Vandenberg Village Community Services District Board Members Ron Stassi (left) and Steve Heuring (right).

Right: Asm. Hart (center) and CSDA Public Affairs Field Coordinator Charlotte Hollifield (right) recognized Goleta Sanitary District Director George Emerson (left) for his years of service to the District, Chapter, and CSDA Board.

aligns with the community’s interests and the Coastal Act’s objectives. Patience is key, as it may take time to address concerns, resolve issues, and obtain necessary approvals. Keep track of updates, changes in regulations, and relevant public meetings or hearings related to coastal development.

This year, you’re authoring AB 557, sponsored by CSDA, that would extend the ability of local governmental bodies to meet remotely under a statewide-declared emergency. Why did you feel it was important to carry this bill?

As Chair of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors during the peak of the pandemic, I saw how important it was for other local jurisdictions and special districts to use emergency authority for remote meetings. Using teleconferencing, we successfully conducted business and ensured public engagement in a safe manner that protected everyone.

It is evident that preparing for future emergencies is crucial. Recent events, such as catastrophic floods and

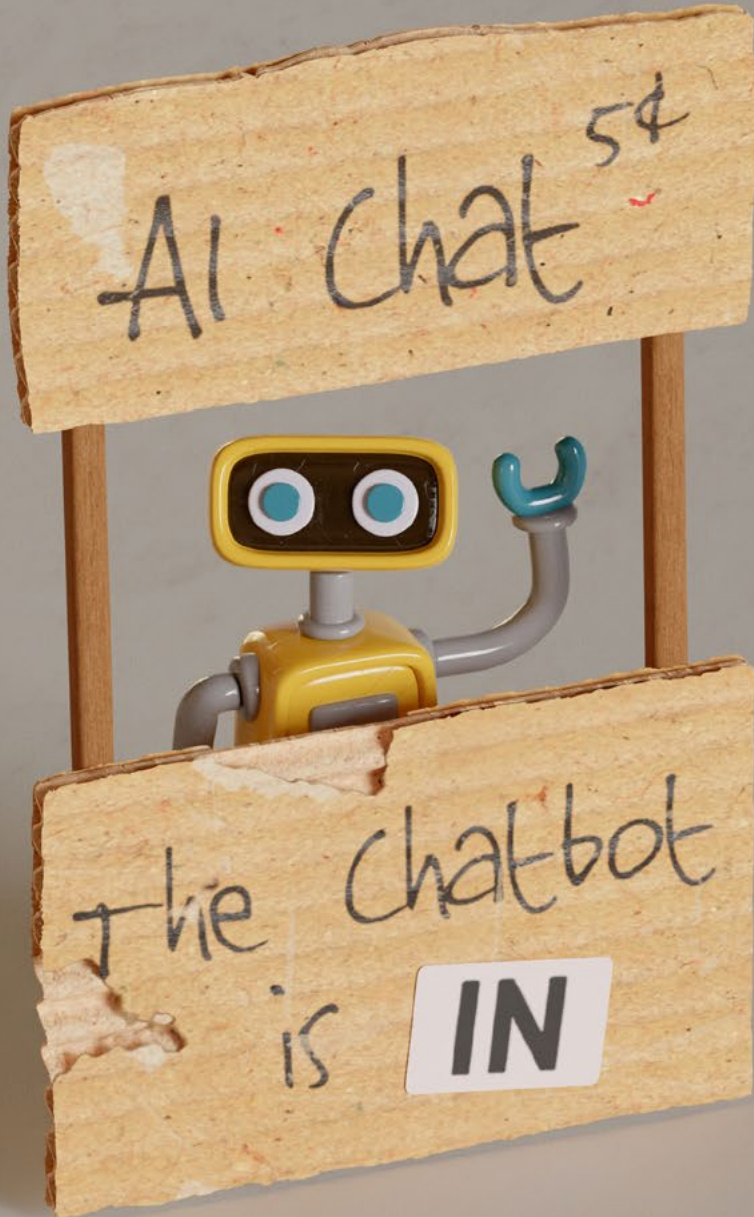
devastating wildfires, further highlight the significance of AB 557. This legislation will allow local governments to meet remotely during crises, enhance overall preparedness, and strengthen public access to crucial decision-making processes. By enabling broad access to remote meetings, we foster transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness in times of emergency.

What tips do you have for special districts to effectively interact with their elected representatives?

The most effective public servants build and maintain positive relationships with their constituents, colleagues, and community leaders. Building trust requires investing time and good communication skills.

Elected officials at every level of government benefit from hearing about success stories and positive outcomes resulting from the district’s initiatives. Demonstrating the district’s contributions to the community’s well-being will earn the support and appreciation of elected representatives.

Tech Tips



ChatGPT in the Public Sector: **4 Tips to Help You Get Started**

By Zacc Dukowitz, excerpted from an AI guide for government created by OpenGov, available at opengov.com/article/ai-for-government/

AI is all over the news lately.

Some municipalities, like the City of San Jose, are issuing guidelines to help public sector employees understand how to use tools like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard safely. Others are simply banning AI altogether, at least for the time being.

And the applications seem endless. Before long we may see ChatGPT helping those in the public sector plan strategic budgeting, create annual reports, or even analyze backlogs of deferred maintenance to prioritize the order in which they're done.

While it's true that generative AI has the potential to streamline your work, increasing productivity and saving time, it's important to orient yourself on how to use it and the pitfalls to avoid.

Here are four tips for using ChatGPT in the public sector.

1. DON'T RELY ON CHATGPT FOR FACTS OR DATA

ChatGPT can make things up. The word coined for this phenomenon is a hallucination—and because of hallucinations, you shouldn't trust ChatGPT to produce facts or data for you.

To put it another way, if you ask ChatGPT a question about an event in history, or about a local law affecting your special district, it may produce an answer—even if the event never happened.

On the other hand, if you provide data to ChatGPT and have it analyze that data, you can trust the results. Just don't trust it to create its own data or facts.

2. DON'T SHARE SENSITIVE INFORMATION

If you're using a free ChatGPT account, then any information you enter will be used to train it and will be in it forever.

- » To avoid privacy concerns: Don't input private data or personal data, such as emails, birthdays, or social security numbers, into ChatGPT or other generative AI tools.

- » Consider opening a paid account so you can retain ownership of your data. *Double check with your CIO or IT lead about this before assuming that a paid account will protect your privacy.
- » Turn off data sharing as best you can.

3. WORK ON YOUR PROMPTS

To get the best outputs from ChatGPT, make sure you spend time on the prompt you're using. If your prompt is short and lacks detail, the results probably won't be that good, and may require a lot of work to get closer to the level of quality you want. To make better writing prompts, try using the RELIC formula:

- » Role — describe the ideal persona for doing the writing you need.
- » Exclusion — is there anything you don't want included in the output?
- » Length — how many words do you want the output to be?
- » Inspiration — provide an example piece of writing that can be used to guide tone, style, and voice for ChatGPT's writing.
- » Context — why are you doing this task and how will the output be used?

Don't worry about using all five every time. Instead, use these five types of information as guidelines. And if you don't like the result, you can always try providing more detail—especially for the persona.

4. ITERATE, ITERATE, ITERATE

If you don't like the initial output you get, ask ChatGPT to try again.

Provide specifics when you do this, such as, "That was good, but please write it again and make sure you use the voice of a public sector professional who is writing for other public sector professionals."

Keep trying until you get what you want.

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2022

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100

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\$670m

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\$2m

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What's So Special



Adventures in VR

By Vanessa Gonzales, CSDA Communications Specialist & Kara Ralston, Camarillo Health Care District CEO

“This is trippy!” We will never forget this description of the Camarillo Health Care District’s *“Adventures in VR”* program. We’ll also never forget, and never tire of, the feeling of changing someone’s life and sense of well-being through our services.

There is no denying that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated already existing risks of isolation, loneliness, and depression, especially for older adults. With so many services moving immediately into online-only access, digital literacy also became a significant issue, as most medical providers offered tele-health visits only during the depths of the pandemic. As you might imagine, many households of older adults didn’t have all the computers, cameras and other equipment needed for telehealth, and also didn’t have the digital literacy (skill set) needed to use it for regular and preventive health care.

So as the various pandemic restrictions began lifting, the Camarillo Health Care District (District) needed to re-emerge into a very different world, which required very different thinking to address these exacerbated issues of isolation, loneliness, depression, and now digital literacy. The question was: How do we help with such difficult issues in a way that is engaging enough for people who

want to participate, and how do we fund it?

The answer was...you guessed it...with virtual reality (VR)! According to the study *“Impact of Virtual Reality Experience on Older Adults’ Well Being”* published by MIT’s Integrated Design & Management and MIT AgeLab, “VR is believed to be beneficial to older adults due to its immersive interaction capabilities. Participants who used the VR system reported being less socially isolated, being less likely to show signs of depression, experiencing positive affects more frequently, and feeling better about their overall well-being.”

We were hooked, and the rest has become history. Following research on the emerging use of VR in health care, and a special COVID-19 Community Relief appropriation from our Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, the District launched *“Adventures in VR,”* a virtual reality program that teaches digital literacy while having fun and sharing experiences as a group, thereby addressing loneliness and depression. The program is broadly inclusive and addresses some socio-economic factors, as many households don’t have discretionary income to purchase VR equipment. Now we just had to get people to try it!

continued on page 36...

The term “virtual reality” is new to quite a large segment of the population, but true to the MIT studies, the immersive and interactive elements of the program drew people in. “*Adventures in VR*” offered a way for people to “travel” (virtually) again, some of whom are unable due to physical or financial challenges, or other issues such as being full-time caregivers for loved ones. Some of the VR programs include “BRINK Traveler,” “Wander,” AARP’s “Alcove” and “National Geographic Explore VR.” Wander and BRINK Traveler are 360-degree, immersive applications of specific locations, such as state and national parks, historic landmarks, and cityscapes at true scale. The Alcove application features 360-degree immersive video and includes virtual hot-air balloon rides over the Swiss Alps and Kenya, guided bus tours in Tokyo, Dubai and other international cities, USA road trips by car, and exploration of major cities, historical landmarks, and other locations around the world.

“It’s so invigorating...it’s the feeling of actually being there!” said a 68-year-old retiree who stopped traveling to care for her husband. The time she spends with VR provides some much-needed respite, and an opportunity to socialize over common experiences with others in the class. District CEO Kara Ralston added, “Offering such an exciting

opportunity for people of every age and ability, coupled with fantastic results of addressing loneliness, depression and digital literacy is what we live for.”

Since the launch of the program in late 2022, more than 250 people have been served, between the ages of 22 and 96, with a 95% approval survey! With validation that our wacky idea was working, we approached the City of Camarillo and applied to their community grant program to fund a pilot Mobile VR program so that we could take the VR experience to those who are homebound. What a moving experience that has been!

That’s where we heard, for the first time, the program’s new motto: “This is trippy!” shared by an 80+ year-old homebound resident. This program fully embraces our purpose of changing aging through innovative health and wellness and has literally moved our staff to tears watching how their program is affecting people and changing lives. This **is** very trippy, and we encourage you to try a virtual reality experience if you haven’t yet!

As a result of their impressive efforts, Camarillo Health Care District is the winner of the 2023 CSDA Award for Innovative Program of the Year by a Small District. Check out their video at <https://youtu.be/rFpm32jPl8o> to learn more.



Legal Brief

New Campaign Finance Law Creates Potential Pitfalls for Local Officials

by Craig Steele,¹ Richards, Watson & Gerson

California's Political Reform Act² ("PRA") is the main conflict of interest law that governs the activities of local public officials. Throughout the history of the PRA, campaign contributions to elected officials have never created a conflict of interest requiring action by the recipient, until now³. SB 1439, effective January 1, 2023, will require new vigilance by elected and appointed officials about the identity and interests of campaign contributors.

This article is not legal advice on the full text and specific application of SB 1439 but is intended to be a broad overview for local elected officials and staff, with concepts to consider and discuss with your counsel.

Following SB 1439, if an elected or appointed official of a local agency⁴ willfully or knowingly receives a campaign contribution of more than \$250 from a party or participant with a financial interest⁵ (or their agent) in a proceeding before the agency within the preceding 12 months, the officer must disclose the contribution on the record of the proceeding before the decision is made and recuse themselves from the decision. Further, elected and appointed officials now cannot solicit, accept, or direct a campaign contribution⁶ of more than \$250 from the party, participant with a financial interest, or their agents, while the proceeding is pending and for 12 months after it concludes.

The term "proceeding" includes many types of local government licenses, permits, or entitlements for use, and all contracts, except competitively bid, labor, and personal employment contracts⁷. The time frames imposed by Government Code Section 84308 kick-in when the agency begins consideration of one of these governmental proceedings and lasts while the decision is pending.

It is understandable that an official must avoid conflicts of interest associated with a party who is a campaign contributor of more than \$250 in the 12 months prior to a governmental decision. Similarly, the ban on soliciting campaign contributions of over \$250 from the party to a governmental decision for 12 months after the decision is relatively straightforward. But SB 1439's new concept, that campaign contributions of more than \$250 from participants with a financial interest in a proceeding also can create a conflict of interest for the recipient, will be a much more difficult provision to comply with.

A participant is defined as a person who lobbies, testifies in person, or otherwise communicates with an officer or employee of the agency for the purpose of influencing the decision-making, but is not a party to the decision. The officer must have actual knowledge of the participant's financial interest, or the participant must reveal facts

continued on page 38...

during the proceeding that make that person’s financial interest apparent. The participant’s financial interest might include a real property interest within 500 feet of the real property at issue; an economic interest in a business that could see an increase or decrease in customers; or a business relationship with the party that could increase the services provided to the party⁸.

This new participant-based conflict of interest could create significant problems for local elected officials who accept campaign contributions over \$250. In the case of a “participant,” two facts are important to know to avoid violating Government Code Section 84308:

1. If a “participant” contributed over \$250 to the official in the 12 months prior to a decision, and
2. If the “participant” has a financial interest in the governmental decision.

If the official knows those two things about a participant, they must disclose the contribution and immediately recuse themselves from the decision. This requirement is obviously perilous for local officials, not to mention fertile ground for those who want to force the recusal of a decision-maker in a matter. Those who watch these issues in your community may compare the identities of parties and participants to campaign disclosure reports and use arguable violations of Government Code Section 84308 for strategic or political advantage.

A helpful protection provided in SB 1439 is the official’s ability to cure potential violations or inadvertent violations by returning contributions within a short time. Local officials and counsel should be aware of these provisions and the deadlines.

As noted, SB 1439 requires extra attention to avoid violations. And it may well be in your agency’s interest to help officials comply with this new law. The following are some basic recommendations to help compliance:

1. Campaign committees must carefully monitor contribution amounts, and officials should consider self-limiting contributions to \$250 or less for purposes of both the fundraising ban and the recusal requirement.
2. Committees should also ensure that multiple small donations from a repeat donor do not amount to over \$250 within a 12-month period.

3. Public agency staff should consider whether it is practical to compile lists of donors of more than \$250 for each official to help with compliance⁹.

¹ Shareholder, Richards, Watson & Gerson; General Counsel, Nipomo Community Services District and City Attorney, City of Monrovia. My thanks to my colleague Natalie Kalbakian, whose research and input on this issue has been invaluable.
² Government Code §§ 81000, et seq.
³ Much of the law that is discussed in this article already applied to appointed local officials.
⁴ See the definition in Government Code Section 82003
⁵ Assuming the official knows, or has reason to know, of the participant’s financial interest. Government Code Section 84308(b).
⁶ Note that the term “contribution” includes contributions to federal, state, and local campaigns. Government Code Section 84308(a)(6).
⁷ Government Code Section 84308(a)(5)
⁸ Please consult the FPPC’s regulations for a more detailed description.
⁹ This assistance by the agency is not a legal requirement.

Save the Dates! 2024 CSDA Conferences

Special District Leadership Academy Coastal
February 4 - 7, 2024 | San Luis Obispo

SDRMA Spring Education Day
March 26, 2024 | Sacramento

Special District Leadership Academy South
April 14 - 17, 2024 | San Diego Bay Downtown

Special Districts Legislative Days
May 21 - 22, 2024 | Sacramento

General Manager Leadership Summit
June 23 - June 25, 2024 | Anaheim

CSDA Annual Conference & Exhibitor Showcase
September 9 - 12, 2024 | Indian Wells

Board Secretary/Clerk Conference
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Industry Insights

A photograph of a chessboard with black and gold pawns and a red horseshoe magnet. The pawns are arranged on a dark, reflective surface. A red horseshoe magnet is positioned in the lower right corner, with its poles facing towards a cluster of gold pawns. The background is dark and slightly blurred, emphasizing the pawns and the magnet.

Marketing Matters for Recruiting and Retaining Employees

By Melissa Asher, PMP, SHRM-SCP, CPS HR Consulting

Recruiting and retaining employees in today's competitive job market requires more than traditional methods, especially for public sector organizations. To be effective, progressive organizations are adopting marketing tactics to attract and engage talent. This article explores various marketing techniques that can be applied to the recruiting process, providing insights and strategies to optimize finding and retaining talent.

1. UNDERSTAND YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Define your ideal candidate profile by considering qualifications, skills, background, and motivations. Think through where your target candidates spend their time, both online and offline. This is critical to tailoring your message and knowing where to place your message to resonate with your desired talent pool. An example of this is to post a job opening for a financial position with the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers (CSMFO). Or, for recruiting in a rural area known for mountain biking, post on a Facebook group for mountain biking enthusiasts.

2. BUILD A STRONG EMPLOYER BRAND

Your employer brand plays a crucial role in attracting top candidates and can help you retain your current team. Develop a strong employer value proposition (EVP) that showcases your organization's unique culture, values, benefits, and career growth opportunities. This can be a focus on family, commitment to employee development, stability, care for the community served, flexibility, or other things that make your organization worth joining. Then consistently communicate your EVP through multiple channels, including your website (external and intranet), social media, and employee testimonials. Highlight what sets your organization apart and why candidates should choose to work with you. This is also an opportunity for your current employees to reconnect with and reinforce why they love working for your organization.

3. CREATE COMPELLING JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Craft job descriptions that go beyond a list of responsibilities and requirements. Apply marketing principles to make your job descriptions engaging and

captivating. Use persuasive language, emphasize the impact and purpose of the role, and clearly outline the benefits and opportunities it offers. This is especially important for public sector jobs where unclear or technical language is often used. Your goal is to give prospective candidates reasons to apply. Tout the benefits and promote your organization (see EVP above). Make sure you are using short and descriptive job duties and leading with a clear job title that most people will understand. If you are really feeling ambitious, incorporate multimedia elements, like videos or infographics, to enhance your job posting.

4. UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Leverage the power of social media to reach and engage with potential candidates and highlight your current employees. You probably already have a presence on some platforms, like Facebook or LinkedIn. Leverage that presence by posting regularly and include your job openings. Create and share compelling content, including employee stories, organization news, and industry insights. These can be short quotes from employees, photos of your work, short videos filmed with a mobile phone, or testimonials from your customers. Also, actively participate in relevant groups and discussions to raise your organization's profile in the industry and with potential candidates. Frequently promote your organization using your EVP language. It's okay to start small and increase your activity over time.

5. BUILD BRAND AMBASSADORS

Tap into your existing talent pool by building brand ambassadors. Brand ambassadors are current employees who represent the face, voice, values, culture, and attitude of your organization in a positive way to build awareness and interest in the organization. They will authentically communicate and connect with current and prospective employees through a variety of ways:

- Attending in-person events
- Posting and sharing organizational content
- Creating online content (i.e., blogs, newsletters, testimonials)
- Generating interest and leads in the community

These individuals create a positive “buzz” by spreading the word about your organization to as many people as possible through word-of-mouth marketing, event marketing, content marketing and social media marketing. This also builds a sense of pride, not only in the brand ambassadors, but across the organization as current employees see their colleagues touting why your organization is a great place to work.

6. OPTIMIZE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

One of the most important things you can do is to apply customer-centric principles to the candidate experience. Streamline the application process, provide regular updates, and offer personalized interactions. Set yourself apart by creating an application that is easy to complete, limiting supplemental questions, and providing clear communication and timely feedback to candidates. Don't become the black hole of applications. Quickly determine your best applicants and reach out to them personally for an initial screening conversation over the phone or via Zoom. These steps will create a positive impression of your organization throughout the hiring journey, making it more likely that you will snap top talent.

Incorporating marketing tactics into your recruiting efforts can revolutionize the way you attract top talent and keep your current workforce engaged. Tapping into the “why” for your organization is the first step, spreading the word as far and wide as you can, and putting thought and effort into creating a positive experience will give you a competitive edge in today's job market.

So, what is your EVP?

Melissa Asher is a Senior Leader at CPS HR Consulting, leading their Talent Acquisition division. CPS HR Consulting provides integrated HR solutions to the public sector. We offer unrivaled expertise in organizational strategy, recruitment and selection, classification and compensation, and training and development. CPS HR is a Diamond Level Business Affiliate of CSDA. www.cpsshr.us

DISTRICTS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

It's SO Easy to Boost Your Social Media Reach! Join the Public Awareness Campaign for Special Districts

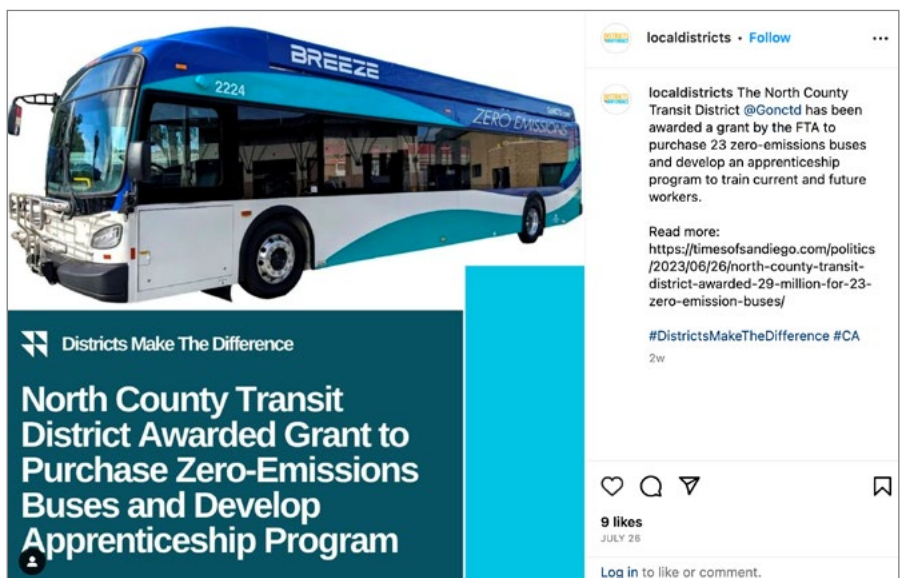
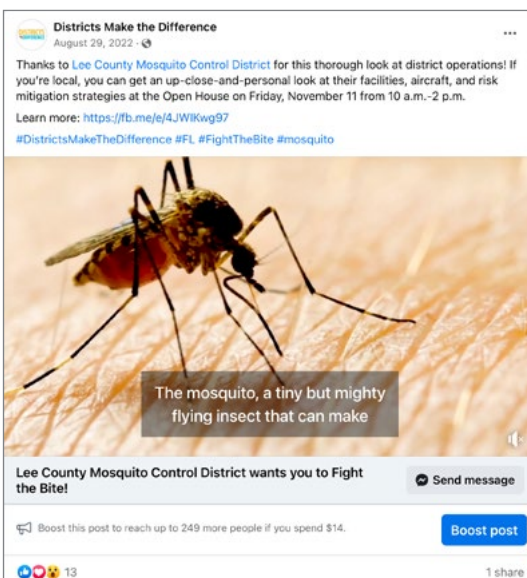
Districts Make The Difference (DMTD) is a public awareness campaign started by the California Special Districts Association and expanded across the United States by the National Special Districts Coalition (of which CSDA is a founding member). Special district professionals know all too well that the general public is unaware of the nuance of special districts as a distinctly local, separate layer of government that provides essential services they rely on in their daily lives.

By broadcasting compelling, positive stories through the Districts Make The Difference social media channels, the term 'special districts' becomes associated with local services and positive connotations. The campaign is also instrumental in helping legislators understand the role of districts and the need to specifically include special districts in their bills and funding to ensure they are effectively governing to the local level.

We invite all special districts across the country (there are more than 30,000 of them!) to join the campaign by tagging @LocalDistricts in social media posts that broadcast good

news, accomplishments, awards and community events. The campaign routinely reaches out to special districts to develop stories, boost content, and share news releases. It is an effective way to broaden your message, gain followers and help other special districts see your good news stories!

In the first half of 2023, the Districts Make The Difference social media campaign had a viewership of 2.6 million people, with nearly 133,000 responses to the posts across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. If your district is posting on these platforms, simply add @LocalDistricts to your tags to gain an instant boost to your audience!





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Are Special Events Harmless?

By Wendy Tucker, AU, SDRMA Member Services Manager

Does your district receive Use of Facility requests for weddings, parties, or to host a meeting? Does your district want to host your own event off-site? Is this covered under your insurance policy or does this require a separate special event policy?

“Special events” are typically one-time events outside the normal range of programs and activities. Many of the District’s hosted off-site events are likely covered under your general liability policy, but what about people or entities using district facilities? What additional risks may your district be taking on?

Read on for guidance on detecting your district’s vulnerabilities when allowing or hosting special events:

Facility Use Agreements

District as the Host – When renting off-site premises, most entities will require to be named as an additional insured and have specific insurance requirements. Read the agreement carefully and review with your insurance provider to determine if the event is covered under your existing policy or if a separate policy is needed. Depending on the size and type of activity, you may also want to check with your district’s legal counsel for any additional recommendations.

District as the Lessor - When allowing a member of the public or another entity to use district facilities, you should have an agreement in place requiring that the renter provide a certificate and endorsement naming the district as an additional insured.

The insurance requirements in the agreement should be relevant to what the activity is. For example, if an entity is using a meeting room to host a public meeting, \$1M in general liability limits may be appropriate. However, if an entity is using facilities for a wedding or party where they will be serving or selling alcohol, in addition to the general liability you will need to require liquor liability. If the renter does not have insurance, they can purchase “Special Event Coverage” that will cover their event. Creating a checklist to use in conjunction with the use of a facilities/ rental application will aid in ensuring that all insurance and safety checks have been completed.

Selling or Serving Alcohol

District as the Host – Some events may include serving or selling alcohol. If the district is hosting an event and alcohol is served, check with your insurance provider to confirm how coverage applies. Any hired vendors will need to name the district as an additional insured for liability and liquor liability. Additional considerations may include:

- Who will verify the age of the participants?
- Is there be a safety plan in place in case of disorderly conduct?
- Should security be provided?

District as the Lessor - If a renter is using the district's facilities, the general liability certificate and endorsement needs to include host liquor liability insurance. If they will be selling alcohol, they need to have a valid liquor sales license and have liquor liability covering the sale of alcohol.

Whether the district is hosting or allowing use of facilities to a renter, the links below provide important information regarding the CA ABC requirements (Alcoholic Beverage Control) as well as considerations for when security is required:

- www.abc.ca.gov/licensing/license-forms/event-authorization/
- apg-svcs.com/do-you-need-security-to-have-alcohol-for-an-event-in-california/

Outdoor Concerts/Markets/Parades

District as the Host - These types of events often involve street closures as well as multiple vendors, so consideration should be given to the potential risks. When hosting, whether on or off-site, the district should confirm with their insurance provider that no additional insurance is needed. The district should also require additional insured endorsements from any vendors and food trucks that include the appropriate coverage (i.e., liquor liability, general liability, auto liability, etc.). If the event includes closing off streets, be sure that an approved traffic safety plan is also in place.

District as the Lessor – If a renter is applying for use of facilities for this type of event, the use of facilities/rental agreement should include that any vendors used by the renter need to have the same insurance requirements as the renter. If the event has street closures, as noted above, a traffic safety plan should be in place. The California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices at

www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/tcd/workzones.html can be referenced for more information.

Bounce Houses

District as the Host – Bounce house rentals are common at outdoor events, and while the bounce house company is responsible for the set up and tear down, the district should still develop a best practices list to ensure the safety of the users. The bounce house company should provide the district with a certificate and endorsement naming the district as an additional insured. The district may also consider having participants sign waivers prior to using the bounce house.

District as the Lessor – Along with the additional insured certificate and endorsement for the event with the bounce house, having best practices and safety measures to provide to the renter would be beneficial. Examples of best practices include, but are not limited to:

- Adult supervision of children is required at all times.
- The bounce house must be staked to the ground.
- If strong winds or thunderstorms arise, the bounce house will be immediately shut down.
- Ensure power cords and other tripping hazards are minimized.

While the goal for special districts is to provide a public service and support public activities, it is vital to make certain that you are transferring the risk where appropriate. Having policies and procedures in place for rentals/events will ensure that your district is following consistent guidelines. It is also important to understand what the risks are before engaging in one-time events, whether you are hosting or allowing the event on district premises. By implementing and following policies, procedures, and safety checklists, you will create a culture of consistency and safety which will ultimately assist in reducing the district's risk exposure and unintended consequences of allowing public events on your property. Talk with your risk manager and/or insurance provider to assist with the development of these important documents.

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Special Districts Risk Management Authority
www.sdrma.org



California CLASS
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OC Cemetery Enhanced Customer Service with Allpaid

When Orange County Cemetery District began processing their credit card transactions with Allpaid in 2019, Finance and Accounting Manager Brenda Manriquez estimated the district was processing only 25% of its sales using credit cards. People who paid for services with a credit card before the district utilized Allpaid’s convenient service had to come to the district’s office and present their card to be swiped. Using Allpaid has allowed the district to take credit card payments over the phone, making it so convenient the district now sees closer to 75% of its transactions via credit card.

“Switching over from our old system was relatively seamless,” said Manriquez. In addition, she noted the transaction reporting has been easy to customize and provides excellent access to each transaction as well as

overview and analysis. “We have it set up so I get automatic emails of our transactions, and we get our reports every day with summaries and we can drill down to anything we need to,” said Manriquez. She added, “If we ever have questions or problems, we can file a support ticket online and we have very good communication from Allpaid and we generally get resolution within an hour.”

Overall, the district felt it was important to provide a more convenient payment method for their customers that allowed for online payments. From setting up their accounting codes to receiving transaction reports, the Proview system they use has been seamless and comprehensive in providing the functionality and reporting they need to keep their operations running smoothly.

Orange County Cemetery District is an accredited Gold Level District of Distinction member of CSDA. This accreditation demonstrates sound fiscal management policies and practices. As part of the accreditation, the district has also achieved the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence from the Special District Leadership Foundation.



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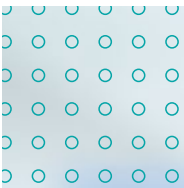


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Cash Flow Needs and Interim Financing: **An Opportunity to Fill the Gaps**

By Jennifer Bradlee, Best Best & Krieger LLP Of Counsel

No public agency is exempt from the occasional need to manage cash flow issues, including special districts. With the recent California fires, continual water supply problems, looming capital project schedules, and even the mismatch in timing of expenditures and receipt of revenues, there are a host of reasons that may leave a special district in need of a way to temporarily fill the funding gap.

While long-term financing options, such as bonds and enterprise revenue financings, are typically in the forefront in the world of municipal finance, short-term interim financing plans can be overlooked, but often necessary. And most special districts have a variety of options for obtaining temporary funding for the agency in time of need.

IDENTIFY REVENUE NEEDS

It is important for special districts to take a holistic approach to their revenue and cash flow needs. Special districts should have a solid understanding of their sources and timing of revenue, not only for operations but for capital projects as well.

Capital Project Funding

There are a variety of ways in which a special district can finance capital projects, including general obligation bonds, certificates of participation, enterprise revenue bonds, federal loans, and other common long-term financing vehicles. But at times, the project schedule or initial project and planning needs get out ahead of the source of the financed proceeds. For example, even though a special district may have obtained voter authority to issue bonds for a capital project, the time between voter authorization and the actual issuance of bonds and receipt of proceeds can be years. In this instance, the planning and initial costs for such a project are likely to already be underway. While some special districts may be able to shoulder the costs until they are reimbursed with financed proceeds, many others cannot absorb a hit to their general and/or reserve funds, even if temporary. Additionally, some sources of financed moneys, including certain federal lending programs, require a special district to obtain interim financing prior to the receipt of the loaned

continued on page 50...

proceeds. In these cases, special districts may be able to fill the gaps with a variety of interim financing vehicles.

Cash Flow Needs

In addition to capital projects, certain cash flow needs can leave a special district in need of interim funding. Special districts may experience a mismatch in the timing of the payment of expenditures and their receipt of revenues, including tax revenues. Other special districts may experience an unexpected increase in expenditures which can be caused by a variety of occurrences, including a heavy fire season or natural disaster, which depletes general fund or reserve moneys. In such cases, interim financing may not only be available, but may be the desired option, to cover a temporary need for operational moneys.

There are a variety of financing team members who assist special districts through the winding roads of municipal finance. And due to some of the complexities involved,

it is important for special districts to reach out to team members early on in the process. From legal counsel to financial advisors, the earlier a special district reaches out, the easier the process becomes with more options available for consideration.

In order to even know where to start, a special district must first assess its financial needs and understand them. And while the process of obtaining interim financing may seem daunting, there are many team members available to special districts who are able to remove the burden and assist in problem solving. Because interim financing can become an important part of a capital project or operational plan for a special district, it is good to remember there is likely a way to fill the funding gaps.

Making that Energy Efficiency Project a Reality

Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, special districts can now receive direct payment subsidies for qualified renewable energy projects. At the recent General Managers Leadership Summit, CSDA Finance Corporation hosted a session on renewable energy projects and IRA subsidies. This timely topic is a popular one with special districts seeking to reduce energy costs and increase sustainability. If your district is considering solar or other renewable energy projects, CSDA Finance Corporation can help you secure financing.

CSDA Finance Corporation has a 35-year track record in providing special districts with cost-effective financing options for all kinds of infrastructure projects. Our team of consultants is experienced in the funding of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, and knowledgeable in the ways your district can benefit from IRA subsidies.

There is no cost or obligation to get a preliminary quote or credit review. Simply contact CSDA Finance Corporation at 877.924.2732 or visit www.csdafinance.net.

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