



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Public Works
Department No.: 054
For Agenda Of: 9/20/2011
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Tme: 10/11/2011, 15 min
11/1/2011, Admin
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Directors, Laguna County Sanitation District

FROM: Department Scott D. McGolpin, P.E., x3010
Director(s) Public Works Director

Contact Info: Mark A. Schleich, P.E., x3610
Deputy Public Works Director

SUBJECT: Laguna County Sanitation District Board Ordinance Amending Chapter 29 of the Santa Barbara County Code – Fourth and Fifth Supervisorial Districts

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form: No

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

Set hearing on October 11, 2011 on the departmental agenda to consider recommendations regarding a water softener control ordinance and water softener exchange program as follows:

- A. Consider the introduction (first reading) of an ordinance entitled “An Ordinance for the Laguna County Sanitation District Amending Article III of Chapter 29 of the County Code of the County of Santa Barbara Regarding Water Softening Systems or Devices,”
- B. Accept the Notice of Exemption pursuant to the State Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (14 CCR 15061 (b)(3)); and
- C. Set hearing on November 1, 2011 on the administrative agenda to consider the following:
 1. Adoption (second reading) of an ordinance entitled “An Ordinance for the Laguna County Sanitation District Amending Article III of Chapter 29 of the County Code of the County of Santa Barbara Regarding Water Softening Systems or Devices”; and
 2. Approval of the Notice of Exemption pursuant to the State Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (14 CCR 15061 (b)(3)); and

Summary Text:

These actions recommend the adoption of an ordinance that would prohibit the installation of regenerating water softeners in all new development after its effective date. The prohibition is intended to help reduce the costs of future upgrades by minimizing the amount of salt that may be discharged to the Laguna County Sanitation District (District) sewer system and help meet state effluent standards. These actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as they do not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

Background:

The majority of potable water supplied within the Laguna County Sanitation District service territory comes from the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin as purveyed by the Golden State Water Company. While some salt is added to water from use, the fact that the groundwater is “very hard” necessitates the extensive practice of water softening. Unfortunately, the salt added to regenerating water softeners (used by 55% of District customers) is discharged to the sewer and becomes a form of water pollution, which limits the beneficial uses of the groundwater.

The District is regulated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) to reduce salt in the wastewater such that the treated water meets discharge standards. Initial attempts to control salt included an ordinance that prohibited regenerating water softeners (later invalidated by court action) and certain plant improvements that included the installation of reverse osmosis for a portion of the flow and a disposal well for the brine. While salt content in the treated water has been drastically reduced by the plant improvements, the concentration for chloride still slightly exceeds the permitted level. Therefore, further reductions are necessary to comply with regulatory limits and to provide better quality water for recycled water users. The first step in limiting the salt loading is the adoption of a revised ordinance that prohibits the use of regenerating water softeners in new development approved after January 1, 2012. This measure is allowed under Water Code Section 13148 et seq. as enacted October 11, 2009. The proposed ordinance replaces Ordinance 4074 adopted by the board on November 10, 1992 as written into County Code Section 29-26.

An additional step is the best management practice (BMP) of managing the salt loading from existing water softeners. Because the cost to amend the plant with additional reverse osmosis units is extremely cost prohibitive, reducing the amount of salt discharged to the sewer system is preferred. This can best be accomplished by promoting the exchange of regenerating water softeners with canister exchange water softeners as canister systems do not discharge salt to the sewer system. Staff intends to initiate an exchange program to remove 20% to 25% of the estimated 6,500 regenerating water softeners used by District customers, as a like reduction in the chloride load to the plant is expected. The program would budget up to \$400,000 over a 4 year period to provide a \$250 incentive to per customer which will be coupled with a \$150 credit provided by the canister exchange company (in addition to their capital investment) for a total incentive of \$400. Depending on the frequency of canister replacement, this would provide for approximately 8 to 10 months of canister exchange service. The effectiveness of the program would be evaluated at the end of the first year. In order to further address the chloride issue, staff is working with the RWQCB to explore raising the chloride limit to be consistent with other wastewater agencies in the Santa Maria Valley. If the goals of the exchange program are not met, the Board may consider modifications to the ordinance such as requiring higher efficiency softeners, the prohibition on the installation of any regenerating water softeners, or even the mandatory buy-back of regenerating water softeners.

Staff recommends adopting the proposed ordinance to prohibit regenerating water softeners in new development and would recommend future modifications only in the event that other BMPs are not effective. The adoption of the ordinance is not subject to CEQA as it follows the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

None with this action.

Fiscal Analysis:

There is no cost associated with the adoption of the proposed ordinance.

Staffing Impacts:

There are no staffing impacts associated with this action.

Special Instructions:

- A. Government Code § 6066 Publication:
Clerk of the Board to publish notice of the hearings, as set forth in the attached public notice, in the Santa Maria Times. **Recommended publication dates are September 27 and October 4 for the first hearing and October 18 and October 25 for the second hearing.**
- B. Clerk of the Board to forward a certified copy of the amended ordinance to:
 - (1) Martin Wilder, Laguna County Sanitation District in Santa Maria
 - (2) Shannon Barcelona, Resource Recovery & Waste Management Division in Santa Barbara

Attachments:

Ordinance
Ordinance with underline/strikethrough
Public Notice

Authored by:

Martin Wilder, P.E., Utilities Manager, x8750

Copy:

Mike Ledbetter, County Counsel
File - Ordinances