

TEHACHAPI NEWS

Golden Hills CSD picks Option A for sewer upgrade

By Jill Barnes Nelson

September 23, 2016

The board of directors for the Golden Hills Community Services District has selected Option A as the way to move forward to rehabilitate the Golden Hills Sanitation Company.

In a special meeting on Sept. 20, the directors voted 4-1 to select that option in an effort to upgrade the facilities and seek grant opportunities to do so. That option includes rehabilitation of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and related infrastructure.

Director Ed Kennedy voted no, stating he believed Option B would be a better way to go. Option B called for building a possible forced main line to hook up the sewer lines to the City of Tehachapi.

“We should have done this years ago,” said Director John Buckley. “Let's get this process started.”

The packed boardroom, filled mostly with those on the sewer system, applauded the decision of the directors.

The board members certified an Environmental Impact Report at a special meeting on Sept. 12. The EIR included all the possible impacts the two options could have on the area, as well as soliciting comments from the public. It also made recommendations as to what might be the best option.

The EIR report called Option A “the environmental superior alternative.” Certifying the report did not mean the directors agreed or disagreed with the findings, just that they had been made. However, the certification does allow the district to apply for grant money for facility upgrades.

The Golden Hills Sanitation Company has been in receivership since 2012. It services some 180 residents in Golden Hills, and is only operating at 30 percent and could handle more customers with upgrades. The rest of Golden Hills is on septic.

The receiver has been making upgrades to keep the system operational, but if the district were to take over, it would be eligible for grant funding because it is a public entity. The GHCSO has submitted a Letter of Intent to purchase the facilities for \$1 if everything aligns to make it feasible.

Also by purchasing the plant, the district would have more recycled water to use for other purposes.

“With all our septic systems, we have so much of that water just going into the ground,” said Director Marilyn White. “We need a long-term solution to keep that water.”

Director Kathy Cassil agreed.

“We're not thinking five, 10 years down the road, but 20, 50, 100, 300 years from now,” she said.

Buckley said he did some simple math and figured the district is losing about 30,000 gallons of water a day by not recycling the sewer water.

“Think of what we could do with that water by upgrading that facility,” he said. “More people could get on the sewer system.”

Director Kennedy argued Option B would serve the community better. In his statements, he said he felt the cost would be lower for the customers and no additional EIRs would be needed. It has been noted that an addendum report might be required for more detailed impacts on Tom Sawyer Lake with upgrades to the plant.

“I feel Option B would be less work and less involvement by the district,” he said.

Director President Larry Barrett said he thought Option A made more sense.

“I’ve been following this for many years and for me, Option A is a good long-term solution for our sewer customers,” he said. “The EIR had little opposition to that option.”

There were a few questions about costs to those within the district not on the sewer system. Barrett said there could be some initial outlay of funds by the GHCS D for planning and engineering documents for grants, but the district would get that back from the grant.

The directors also voted, 5-0, to move forward in applying for grants for the upgrades. They will work with Self Help Enterprises, which knows the process and also has been in contact with state and county officials concerning the Golden Hills Sanitation Company.

It has related that the GHCS D is considered a “disadvantaged community,” which makes it eligible for 100 percent grant funding.

Barrett and White will serve on an ad hoc committee for the grant proposal.

“I want to keep that plant operational,” Buckley said. “I know we have to be cautious, but I feel this is the right way to go.”