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# ENTERPRISE

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## Poll chooses regional water system Frazier Park PUD takes historic vote to annex Lake of the Woods

By Patric Hedlund, TME

Homemade chocolate chip cookies powered volunteers late into the night at the Frazier Park Public Utility District office Thursday, April 28.

Volunteers formed a work party to open over 500 envelopes, log in parcel numbers and count the straw poll votes by hand.

Customers had been asked if they wish to annex Lake of the

Woods Mutual Water Company. The ballot asked if Frazier Park should create a regional water supply system and accept grants for upgrades and construction provided by state and federal funds—or not.

FPPUD's board members held a vigil, watching the proceedings, waiting for the tally to be complete.

Just after 11 p.m. the provisional first count from Frazier Park customers showed 142 'No' votes and 340 'Yes' votes—with a total of 482 ballots counted.

About 25 ballots that arrived after the published deadline (or with other irregularities) were set aside and not counted, but the poll result was clear.

### Historic Votes

Lake of the Woods water customers had already held a binding vote in February, with 16 'No' votes and 110 'Yes' votes in favor of annexation.

So at 11:10 p.m. Thursday night the Frazier Park board formally voted to accept the straw poll results, then entered a historic unanimous vote to annex Lake of the Woods.

The two districts will next submit their annexation request to Kern County's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAF-CO). That process may take six to nine months, with hearings for public comment.

It was 11:30 p.m. when board

Continued on page 4



Diane Smallwood holds up the last ballot just after 11 p.m.

Frazier Park water customers Diane Smallwood and Maria Dreier (with manager Jonnie Allison providing support) volunteered to count 500 votes. The ballot asked whether or not to annex Lake of the Woods to create a regional water supply system.



Continued from page 1

Chairman Brahma Neyman smashed the gavel on the desk to adjourn the meeting.

The six hour marathon had been like a New Year's Eve countdown to midnight—but without the champagne or dancing. What lies ahead will be a major new chapter for this region.

Before that final gavel, the FPPUD directors asked David Warner, their Self-Help Enterprises consultant, to apply for funds from the state to cover engineering, design, planning and budgeting for the proposed system. That work is required before construction funds can be requested.

It may take two to three years before a regional system is in place—and the process could stop at any time if state funding is inadequate.

The first versions of both the Lake of the Woods and Frazier Park water systems were being built in the 1920s, close to 90

years ago. LOW evolved into a private mutual water company while Frazier Park became a public water district.

Now it is likely that LOW's mutual will become part of Frazier Park's public system.

If so, the size of the board of directors may expand, and all Lake of the Woods residents will be eligible to vote and run for the water board. Names of candidates will appear on the Kern County general election ballot.

Both systems were in the midst of the slow and costly process to upgrade infrastructure when the drought struck. Lake of the Woods lost access to the majority of its water supply in 2013, about halfway through the current five-year drought.

FPPUD began holding open meetings to invite both private and public well owners throughout the region to discuss joining together in a regional supply and distribution system

to provide greater resilience to all residents.

State agencies are offering a "carrot" of significant funding to assist rural systems that may wish to consolidate. In November 2013 an application for a 'preplanning grant' was submitted to the state. In January 2014 the grant was funded.



Volunteers Diane Smallwood and Maria Dreier launch into setting up a system to count votes with Frazier Park Public Utility District General Manager Jonnie Allison. FPPUD Administrative Assistant Tiffany Matie logs the parcel numbers of the votes, while Civil Engineer Dee Jaspas (sitting) and Self-Help Enterprises Consultant David Warner (standing) look on. Not shown, but in for the marathon are Terry Kellery and FPPUD board members Rebecca Gipson (who baked the cookies), Gerald Garcia, Lisa Schoenberg, Frank Durso and Brahma Neyman.

FPPUD and LOW formed a preplanning committee to research the water supply available in the middle and western sections of the Cuddy

Creek Groundwater Basin and to chart the average water consumption by residents of both communities.

In March, Lake of the Woods  
Continued on page 5

### Frazier Park PUD takes historic vote to annex Lake of the Woods

Continued from page 4

Mobile Village and the Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran Church confirmed they also wish to be included in the annexation, as did a few other private well owners.

Of about 1,300 Frazier Park water customers, 38% responded to the straw poll.



Left: Brahma Neyman prepares to adjourn the meeting just before 11:30 p.m. Above: Tiffany Matie finishes tallying the votes and (right) Dee Jaspas tells about new state-ordered groundwater basin management authorities forming.

