

THE PORTERVILLE RECORDER

Porterville provides water to county residents on provisional basis

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By: Charles Whisnand

At its January 17 meeting the Porterville City Council unanimously agreed on a provisional basis to provide water for 389 homes throughout Tulare County who faced being without water last week.

Self-Help Enterprises, which provides resources for low-income families, has been providing weekly water deliveries to the 389 homes. The 389 homes serviced by Self-Help Enterprises have wells that have run dry.

But the source of that water – a well at the Bob Wiley Detention Facility was made inaccessible due to the recent storms. Due to a road closure caused by flooding on Avenue 368 in Visalia, Self-Help water haulers were unable to access the well. Self-Help provides the water to the 389 homes through its Emergency Tank program that's funded by the state.

The county of Tulare requested that a city-county well that was constructed as part of the East Porterville water supply project be used to supply water to the 389 homes for the time being. The council voted unanimously for the city-county well to provide water to the 389 homes on a provisional basis until the road would be repaired and the well would become accessible. Mayor Martha A. Flores, Kellie Carrillo, Greg Meister, Don Weyhrauch and Ray Beltran all voted in favor of the action.

About 50 of the homes being helped are located in the Porterville area, Springville, Strathmore and Poplar.

"I want to maintain a good working relationship with our county," Meister said. "We are county members."

Beltran asked if there would be an impact on the city's water supply. "I do not see a problem," City of Porterville Public Works Director Michael Knight about the city's water supply being impacted.

He said with the recent storms, the city's water supply should be sufficient. "Right now is the better time to do it," said Knight about using the city-county well. "There's not a negative impact this time to provide that assistance."

Carrillo asked if there were other sources that could be used and a Self-Help Director of Emergency Services Tammi McVay said there wasn't. McVay said if the city-county well wasn't made available the 389 homes affected would begin to go without water last week.

City manager John Lollis stated there's up to 3 million gallons a month from the well available if requested by the state as part of the agreement for the city-county well to be developed. The Self-Help Director of Emergency Services Ta said it's expected 1.3 million gallons a month and a maximum of 1.7 million gallons of water a month would be needed for the 389 homes. The water will be billed at the same rate as city of Porterville residents.

"I would like to help out our neighbors," said Meister in making a motion for the well to be made available on a provisional basis.

The council will receive an update on the road repairs to provide access to the Bob Wiley Detention Facility well at its next meeting on February 7 to determine if water needs to be continued to be provided for the 389 homes from the city-county well.

The city-county well is two of three wells that have been completed as part of the East Porterville water supply project to provide water for 900 East Porterville homes. The third well, the infamous Akin Well which has been several years in the making, is scheduled to be completed late this year or early next year.