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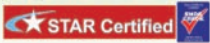
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Please follow these guidelines  
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**1- Letters should respond to  
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**2- Letters can be a maximum  
of 150 words.**

**3- Essays should focus on local  
issues.**

**4-Essays can be 550-600 words  
and must not be previously  
published.**

**5- Email your letters and es-  
says to foornr@newsreview.com**



**SN&R**  
Sacramento News & Review



# Circling the drain

**Arden-Arcade  
neighborhood water  
district faces insolvency  
amid mass resignations  
and infighting**

BY GRAHAM WOMACK

The Del Paso Manor Water District is tiny, with only about 1,800 customers and surrounded by Sacramento Suburban Water District, which served 100 times as many customers last year. For the past year, however, the Del Paso Manor district experienced major drama, throwing it into chaos and uncertainty over whether it can even survive.

DPMWD provides drinking water in the Arden-Arcade area to houses built largely between the 1940s and '60s. Two wells are currently down and the district has an estimated \$20 million to \$30 million in deferred work, according to interim general manager Leo Havener.

"It's an extremely aging infrastructure," Havener told SN&R. "It's pretty much outlived almost its entire lifespan."

The district has attempted to finance infrastructure work in recent years with an approximately \$5 million bond issue in 2010 and a series of subsequent rate increases. This hasn't sat well with Marissa Burt, John Lenahan and Trish Harrington, who campaigned against the increases, were elected to the board in November 2018 and have clashed with staff since.

At the district's Nov. 5 board meeting, former general manager Debra Sedwick—who resigned May 31 along with two of DPMWD's three staff members—told the board that personnel files she'd left in a locked filing cabinet at the district's Maryal Drive office wound up in an unsecured box.

Sedwick told SN&R the files contained copies of marriage and birth certificates, Social Security numbers and other sensitive information—"what is needed for somebody to steal your identity. And that's what makes me nervous."

Sedwick, who has requested an independent investigation, isn't the only person to reach their breaking point with the board. Chief legal counsel Adam Brown resigned Nov. 27 after unsuccessfully advocating for an investigation of the file breach. Harrington quit three days later.

Havener himself briefly quit during the Nov. 5 meeting before Brown persuaded him to stay on the condition that he not be required to attend any



A Sacramento County Sheriff's Office vehicle sat outside Del Paso Manor Water District on July 21. The district has been engulfed in controversy over the past year.

additional board meetings before the end of his six-month contract in February.

"It's a very hostile environment with these folks," Havener said. "They have failed to take legal counsel's advice, and I'm unable to assist them in trying to do things in a way that should be done correctly."

Burt and Lenahan, who didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment, and Harrington campaigned on a number of promises, including that they could cut operational expenses by 25%.

"I can tell you there isn't 25% fat in there, so I don't see them being able to do that one," Sedwick said.

Another board member, Bob Matteoli, objected in a Nov. 5 written statement to the new board's frequent use of ad hoc committees and requested they all be dissolved. One of these committees authorized removal of files from the district's old office in July, with some files going to the new office and the rest being sent to a landfill.

Sedwick said personnel files at the new office were also broken into. Asked if a board member was responsible, Havener replied, "I can neither confirm nor deny that. This is one of those areas I wish I could tell you because I am hell-bent by the Brown Act."

According to a letter obtained by SN&R from Sacramento County Supervisor Susan Peters, who represents the area, both the District Attorney's Office and Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission are now paying attention.

Carol Rose, who lives across the street from the district's old offices, acknowledged there's been talk of a recall election, though it's unlikely to happen. "Of course we've talked about it," Rose told SN&R. "But No. 1, it's expensive and No. 2, I don't think we're going to be able to save this district."

Havener sees the district ultimately having to merge with another. "It's not a matter of if," Havener said. "It's truly a matter of when."