

What's next for 'antenna farm'?

Tracy council set to decide on sports complex project

By Mike Martinez, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, March 6, 2007

TRACY — It's a big piece of property that has generated large amounts of controversy.

Developer agreements, designs, court rulings, incorrect staff reports, redesigns and complaints to state regulators have helped and hampered the progress of a proposed youth sports complex on Schulte Road west of Tracy.

The City Council is expected to decide today on a course of action to develop the 200 acres formerly known as "the antenna farm."

Chris Daste, the city's interim director of parks and community services, said officials are "thrilled" to be so close to starting construction and getting some fields built. "I think it's important for everyone to know, this is just the first shot out of the salvo, this is just the first phase of the project," Daste said. "As funding becomes available, we'll get the fields lit. It's really important to get the children on the fields playing."

Under a staff proposal, the city would have built two synthetic-surface fields with lights and three natural grass fields in the \$13 million first phase of construction for a proposed youth sports complex southwest of Tracy.

It's a change from January, when staff said 11 sports fields, including two synthetic-surface baseball/softball diamonds, could be built for the same amount.

But acting Assistant City Manager Maria Hurtado admitted to the council that the city staff report they approved in January was incorrect and the project would actually cost \$17 million.

The latest concept would provide for four baseball fields and four soccer fields which would be ready for use in late 2008 or early 2009, according to city documents.

A large chunk of the initial investment — \$7.5 million — is being spent on infrastructure. The remaining funds would pay for the fields, all of which would be natural grass and without lights.

But the parents whose children would be using the fields say unlit fields in winter, when it gets dark early and longer, are only good during the weekends.

Cindy Henderson, board chair for Let the Children Play, wants more "bang for the buck" and quality fields. Her organization wants to see the entire sports complex built as soon as possible.

"My frustration is these fields need to be fully equipped, meaning they need to have lights on them," Henderson said. "If they're giving us two or they're giving us eight, the fields need to be able to be used at all times. It does us no good in the wintertime if we don't have lights, it's dark by 5 p.m."

Said Daste: "We're fully aware lights will increase the playability of the fields. That's something we're working towards. We're just thrilled to be able to get some fields built and have some children playing there."

That's not the only issue brought up by local parents.

Last week, a Tracy woman filed a complaint with the California Public Utilities Commission claiming that PG&E fraudulently obtained a waiver for a nearly one-mile stretch of natural gas pipelines that runs through the proposed youth sports complex.

Carole Dominguez, a local soccer mom and unsuccessful candidate for the Tracy City Council last year, also claims that the energy provider violated the terms and conditions of the waiver during recent antenna pole excavation.

Under the waiver, PG&E is required to take some protective actions during the construction of the sports facility. During recent antenna pole removal work, Dominguez claims that PG&E failed to perform any measures.

According to Dominguez's complaint, the utility company didn't consider the work as construction of the sports complex.

"This is an unacceptable and pathetic response from PG&E," Dominguez wrote in her complaint. "Now PG&E is stating they are responsible for 'interpreting' what 'actual' construction is. This is hair-splitting and deliberately deceiving the public in an attempt to excuse their completely irresponsible lack of action and compliance with the terms of the waiver."

Nicole Tam, a spokeswoman for PG&E, said the company has worked closely with federal and state regulators to ensure they are in accordance with the guidelines.

She said they are "going above and beyond" to ensure the safety of everyone and that the company has never been told by any governing agency about being in "violation of any sort" on the proposed sports complex.

"We will be there at all times during construction," Tam said. "We have spent close to \$8 million to assess the integrity of the pipelines and are committed to checking them routinely. That doesn't even take into account putting up the fencing or the personnel who has to be there."

In June, a San Francisco-based environmental consulting firm released a report finding the proposed area for Tracy's youth sports facility "well below the state standard" for cancer risk.

The report found that the southeast corner of the property, on Schulte Road west of Tracy, exceeded a hazard index threshold for [ammonia emissions that apparently come from the Owen's Brockway glass plant](#) about 1,500 feet away.

"The remaining 98 percent of the Antenna Farm site is below the acute (hazard index) ... and is, therefore, without risk of significant [air quality health effects](#)," the report said.

A month later — with the help of former Congressman Richard Pombo — the city paid nearly \$1 million to purchase 50 acres of the antenna farm property for "economic development use" from the General Services Agency which conveyed an adjacent 150 acres for "education and recreational use."

Previously owned by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the parcel was the proposed site for an Immigration and Naturalization Services detention facility, which local officials were able to discourage.

It was rejected as a potential site for a Tracy Learning Center by the city's planning commission in 2004 and for a new San Joaquin Delta College Campus not long after.

The city had been negotiating agreements calling for contributions totaling \$75 million from Surland Development and the Tracy Hills developers to build the Tracy Aquatics Center and the Tracy Sports Complex.

In exchange, Surland — which would have paid \$40 million in cash and land — was to get 200 home building permits and naming rights for the new pool.

Tracy Hills LLC — a partnership involving Souza Realty and Development, and AKT Development — would have paid \$20 million in cash and given the city 15 acres of land in the largest planned housing unit in city history. Half of the cash could have been used at the city's discretion in relation to the sports complex or aquatics center. Not so coincidentally, they are also funding Let the Children Play.

That was until a San Joaquin County Superior Court judge ruled they would violate a measure passed by voters in 2000.

In a four-page ruling, the judge wrote that the Tracy Hills and Ellis development agreements negotiated by the city of Tracy together exceeded the limits of Measure A.

The latest word is that the city is negotiating with both developers who would now share the maximum number of allotted homes allowed under the slow-growth measure in exchange for smaller parks contributions.

Lodi considering nearly \$2 million power play for future

By Jeff Hood - Lodi Bureau Chief
Stockton Record, Tuesday, March 06, 2007

LODI - The largest electricity-generating power plant in San Joaquin County could be serving Lodi's homes by 2010 if the City Council approves taking a \$1.93 million plunge Wednesday.

That's Lodi's share of the \$14 million preconstruction cost of a 255-megawatt plant proposed at White Slough, site of the city's wastewater treatment plant and an existing 49-megawatt plant that rarely operates.

Lodi would join 11 other municipal utilities in building the plant, Lodi utility director George Morrow said. The cities of Santa Clara and Roseville and the Modesto Irrigation District would each take 50 megawatts around the clock, Lodi would receive 30 megawatts, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District would take 15 and seven others would use the rest.

All but Modesto Irrigation District are members of the Northern California Power Agency, a coalition of municipal utilities that owns a variety of power plants in the region.

MID's board has yet to consider the proposal, district spokeswoman Maree Hawkins said.

"We're just in the discussion stage," she said.

The Lodi plant, if built, would produce enough electricity to power nearly 200,000 homes. Lodi's 30-megawatt share would ensure the utility can meet its minimum power needs without being subjected to volatile wholesale energy prices, Morrow said.

Lodi Mayor Bob Johnson said a benefit of the plant is the city could then string power lines that deliver electricity directly from the source to Lodi, rather than through lines owned by other entities such as Pacific Gas & Electric, which charge for that service.

"It puts you in control of your own destiny rather than being at the mercy of others," Johnson said.

Lodi's utility has the cash for the upfront costs, which would go toward engineering studies, some equipment purchases and to purchase credits for the pollution the plant would produce, from bonds issued in 2002. Those bonds were issued to refinance a 1999 debt intended partly to finance new transmission lines west of Lodi.

If built, the Lodi plant would surpass the 169-megawatt GWF Energy plant west of Tracy as the county's largest. The Tracy plant, like the one proposed for Lodi, burns natural gas to create electricity.

With the San Joaquin Valley's air already failing to meet air quality standards, more emissions are not the answer, according to Jane Williams, director of California Communities Against Toxics.

She said power plants already approved by the California Energy Commission for the Central Valley will produce tens of billions of pounds of pollutants over their lifespan, from toxic gases to microscopic particles that cause lung damage.

"It's the cleanest dirty power you can buy," Williams said of the natural gas plants. "You're going to see a miserable effect. We're making energy choices that have a dramatic effect on the lives of our children and no one talks about that."

The environmental effects of the plant will be disclosed in a report before construction can take place. Several government agencies that oversee energy and environmental concerns must also approve the plant before it can be built.

College wants to build new campus

Fresno Pacific plans to build off of Plaza Drive

By Gerald Carroll, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Fresno Pacific University, which serves 700 students out of its Visalia Center, wants to build a 118,000-square-foot operation near Visalia Municipal Airport.

But it wants to move fast -- and at least one Visalia City Council member isn't sure that's a good idea.

The university's building at 5429 W. Cypress Ave. is bursting at the seams, officials say. They'd like to move into a larger facility within 18 months.

"It's needed as soon as it can be built," said Visalia Center Director Vyacheslav Tsvirinko.

Council members Don Landers and Greg Kirkpatrick voiced support Monday for university plans to apply for a permit to build on 3 acres of the 29-acre Plaza Drive Business Park. The proposed construction site is in the southwest corner of the park, located at the corner of Crowley Avenue and Neeley Street.

Approving the project, however, would require the city to speed ahead of the general approval plan for the park itself -- something council member Greg Collins called dangerous precedent. He recommended that Fresno Pacific officials look for a location closer to "the downtown core."

"I have serious reservations about traffic, [air pollution](#) and [maintaining] the vitality of the downtown area," Collins said.

Harvey May of Paloma Development, which would build the Fresno Pacific project, said he hopes to have the operation up and running in time for the fall 2008 academic year.

"If we could get the conditional-use permit through the [Visalia] Planning Commission by June, then we could meet this schedule," May said.

Cindy Steele, director of Fresno Pacific's off-campus centers in Visalia, Bakersfield and North Fresno, said the new building is needed immediately. The university works with College of the Sequoias to provide a "complete four-year college-degree program without ever having to leave Visalia," Tsvirinko said.

"We started out in Visalia with just 100-150 students and now we have more than 700," Steele said. "There's nowhere to put any more."

Council members opted not to take a formal vote Monday, since Mayor Jesus Gamboa was absent because of illness and council member Bob Link excused himself because his wife works for Fresno Pacific.

"But we already have enough of a consensus here for Fresno Pacific to go ahead and submit a permit application," said Mike Olmos, Visalia's director of community development. "That has to come first anyway."

Pollution tied to big rainstorms

Key Davidson, Chronicle Science Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Air pollution from Asia is worsening the severity of Pacific storms -- a surprising development that portends long-term changes in weather in California and the rest of North America as far north as the Arctic.

Scientists reported in today's issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that satellite measurements show the Pacific has experienced more severe storms since 1994 than in the previous decade.

On a computer, they incorporated in their climate model economic data from 1994 to 2005 on how many tons of air pollutants are emitted by Asian countries. The amount is so high that, at times, it rises to 10 to 20 times the normal number of atmospheric particles. They found that increased levels of air pollution neatly jibed with long-term shifts in the severity of Pacific storms since 1994.

And worse weather could be ahead as Asian pollution increases due to growing industrialization, they say. A continued increase in pollution from Asia probably means California, Oregon and Washington state will be in for more severe storms in coming decades, said Renyi Zhang, an atmospheric scientist from Texas A&M who led the team of scientists.

Zhang and his team -- which includes a Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric scientist and one of the world's top experts on thunderstorms -- studied the intensity of Pacific storms from 1994 to 2005 and compared their findings with storms from 1984 to 1993. They concluded that air pollution from Asia worsened the severity, although not the frequency, of Pacific storms by 20 to 50 percent in most recent years of the study.

As pollution levels in Asia continue to rise in response to growing industrialization, "it's probably going to make the (West Coast) storms more violent. ... I think that's very likely," Zhang told The Chronicle.

The finding startled one of the world's top climate change and air pollution experts, Veerabhadran Ramanathan of Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, who was not involved with the Zhang study.

"It is surprising to me, absolutely -- a big surprise," Ramanathan said.

Why would increased pollution make storms worse?

Normally, Zhang explained, rain can't fall until atmospheric water vapor condenses on floating particles or aerosols, such as dust and wind-blown sea salt. Once the water droplets merge and grow fat enough, they fall to Earth.

But air pollution interferes with that rain-formation process, Zhang told The Chronicle. The reason is that fossil fuel-burning industries dump mountains of human-generated aerosols -- mostly sulfate and soot -- into the sky. That means far more aerosols are competing to capture the same amount of water vapor. Thus fewer water droplets grow big enough to fall as rain.

At first glance, one would expect air pollution to diminish rainfall, but the process doesn't end there. Normally falling raindrops create cool "downdrafts" that snuff out a thunderstorm before it grows very tall.

However, in this case, the droplets can't fall; instead, they keep rising into the sky on warm bubbles of air until they freeze miles above the surface.

The result: Thunderstorms grow taller than normal. And that's bad news, because, Zhang explained, the taller a storm, the more violent it is.

The reason is simple high school physics: Because nature expends greater energy building such a tall storm, the storm that results can wreak greater violence -- high winds and downpours -- than a small one.

As a crude analogy, a boulder rolled to the top of a 100-foot hill, then allowed to plummet downhill, wreaks more damage than a boulder rolled to the top of a 10-foot hill.

Zhang's co-authors are Guohui Li and Jiwen Fan of Texas A&M, Dong L. Wu of Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Earle R. Williams of MIT, and Mario J. Molina of UC San Diego.

Asian air pollution affecting weather

The Pacific region has become stormier, scientists say.

By Robert Lee Hotz, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times and Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Asia's growing air pollution — billowing plumes of soot, smog and wood smoke — is making the Pacific region cloudier and stormier, disrupting winter weather patterns along the West Coast and into the Arctic, researchers reported Monday.

Carried on prevailing winds, the industrial outpouring of dust, sulfur, carbon grit and trace metals from booming Asian economies is having an intercontinental cloud-seeding effect, the researchers reported in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The study is the first large-scale analysis to draw a link between Asian air pollution and the changing Pacific weather patterns.

"The pollution transported from Asia makes storms stronger and deeper and more energetic," said lead author Renyi Zhang at Texas A&M University. "It is a direct link from large-scale storm systems to [human-produced] pollution."

Satellite measurements reveal that high-altitude storm clouds over the northern Pacific have increased up to 50% over the last 20 years as new factories, vehicles and power plants in China and India spew growing amounts of microscopic pollutant particles into the air.

The resulting changes have altered how rain droplets form and helped foster the creation of imposing formations over the northern Pacific known as deep convective clouds.

The clouds create powerful updrafts that spawn fiercer thunderstorms and more intense rainfall, particularly during the winter, the researchers said.

Only a decade ago did scientists in the University of California's Pacific Rim Aerosol Network help discover that the pollution crossing the Pacific from Asia was worse than suspected, with millions of tons of previously undetected contaminants carried on the wind.

In fact, on any spring or summer day, almost a third of the air high over Los Angeles, San Francisco and other California cities can be traced directly to Asia, researchers said.

"More stuff starting up over there means more stuff ending up over here," said UC Davis atmospheric scientist Steven Cliff.

Usually, dust and industrial pollutants take from five days to two weeks to cross the Pacific to California.

Zhang and his colleagues conducted their three-year study by comparing satellite imagery of the Pacific region taken from 1984 to 1994 with imagery of the same area from 1994 to 2005. The study, funded by NASA and the National Science Foundation, found that deep convective clouds had increased between 20% and 50%.

Convective clouds include cumulonimbus clouds, which can be many miles thick with a base near Earth's surface and a top frequently at an altitude of 33,000 feet or more.

The research team, which included atmospheric scientists from Caltech, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and UC San Diego, linked the changing cloud patterns to the increasing pollution through a series of computer studies.

The scientists also examined satellite data from the Atlantic region during the same periods, since pollution from North America follows the prevailing winds to Europe. But they did not find any similar pattern of cloud changes or increase in storm intensity.

The Pacific pollution also may affect other pervasive patterns of air circulation that shape world climate.

"If the trend to intensified storms in this region persists, it will likely have profound implications on climate change," said Robert McGraw, a senior atmospheric chemist at Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island, who was not involved in the study.

Among other consequences, the more energetic Pacific storm track could be carrying warmer air and more black soot farther north into the Canadian Arctic, where it may accelerate the melting of polar ice packs, the researchers said.

The researchers emphasized that it would take much more sustained study to understand the international climate ramifications.

Until recently, most scientists believed that, with its adverse effects on health and plant life, such aerosol pollution was mostly a local problem. If anything, it helped rather than hindered the climate — at least in terms of global warming — by offsetting the heat-trapping effects of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane.

At low altitudes, the haze of aerosol particles reflects the sun's energy back into space, cooling Earth's surface slightly. At the same time, the particles help form brighter low-altitude clouds that also shield the surface from solar heat.

But once these tiny particles reach the upper atmosphere, they generate fierce downpours from super-cooled droplets and ice particles instead of gentle warm showers.

At monitoring sites along the U.S. West Coast, scientists have been detecting pollutants that originated from smokestacks and tailpipes thousands of miles to the west.

Recently, researchers at the University of Washington have captured traces of ozone, carbon monoxide, mercury and particulate matter from Asia at monitoring sites on Mt. Bachelor in Oregon and Cheeka Peak in Washington state.

Cliff and his colleagues have been picking up the telltale chemical signatures of Asian particulates and other pollutants at several monitoring sites north of San Francisco and, during the last year, around Southern California.

The pollutants, however, are suspended at high altitude. It is unclear how much of them reach ground level or what their direct effect on local weather might be.

"The air above Los Angeles is primarily from Asia," Cliff said. "Presumably that air has Asian pollution incorporated into it."

Cow waste is hot ticket for energy companies

By Valerie McClain

The Business Journal, Friday, March 2, 2007

Where there are cows, there's manure.

And with 1.5 millions cows in the Central Valley, that manure is starting to look like dollar signs to entrepreneurs.

One Bakersfield-based company wants to install anaerobic digesters on area dairy farms. BioEnergy Solutions recently announced a deal to sell the natural gas produced on these dairies to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

BioEnergy Solutions will deliver up to three billion cubic feet of natural gas to PG&E per year. This will generate enough electricity to meet the needs of 50,000 central and northern California

homes. The company expects to install digester systems in 40 to 50 Central Valley dairies, said Doug Williams, an engineer for BioEnergy Solutions.

The first project will be at the farm of David Albers, founder and president of BioEnergy Solutions. His western Fresno County dairy operation has about 3,000 cows. The system should be installed by the spring, with natural gas expected to start flowing to PG&E by the summer. The gas will be transported via the utility's 5,700 miles of pipeline and be used to deliver electricity to homes.

Last November, another company announced plans to sell natural gas produced by dairies to PG&E. Microgy Inc., based in New Hampshire, will provide about the same amount of gas as BioEnergy Solutions, but from six large dairies. Though Microgy will be competing with his company, Albers has said that BioEnergy Solution's structure gives them an advantage in the region.

"BioEnergy Solutions was founded by dairymen, and we understand the challenges agriculture faces in the coming years to reduce emissions," Albers said.

PG&E is in the process of expanding its renewable fuels portfolio as part of a mandate from the California legislature. It must increase procurement of such resources to a goal of 20 percent of its annual load by the end of 2010. The utility is currently at the 12 percent mark.

"Developing new sources of renewable energy is a priority for PG&E," said Fong Wan, vice president of energy procurement for PG&E.

Other businesses are also tapping into the potential savings from biogas. A Palo Alto company called HBS BioEnergy recently announced intentions to build a Central Valley ethanol plant to be powered by waste produced at surrounding dairies. Officials with HBS BioEnergy estimate the plan would create cost savings of 50 to 80 percent once the plant is built.

It is this type of financial benefit that BioEnergy Solutions hopes will attract dairy farmers to their business. The company will custom-design, install and maintain the infrastructure with no cost to the farmer. The farmer will share in the revenues from gas sales. Farmers can also share in the profits from so-called "carbon credits." These certificates are awarded to groups for every 100 tons of emitted greenhouse gas they can reduce in their operations.

The trade and sale of these carbon credits has become big business since the Chicago Climate Exchange opened in 2003. These credits are traded like stocks, and farmers with digesters on their dairies are starting to court offers from companies to sell their credits, which are worth about \$4 per ton of reduced emissions.

Entrepreneurs and companies are starting to see the potential in developing "green" agriculture and creating more efficiency in the supply chain. Albers is also president and founder of American Dairy Parks, LLC, which is in the process of developing a variety of dairy operations in the Central Valley.

The group will break ground later this year on a \$225 million cheese plant in Western Fresno County that will process 6.8 million pounds of milk daily.

Albers said American Dairy Parks, which also includes crop farming and milk production, is an example of a "vertically integrated" farming operation.

"We are a group of dairy farmers who want to find ways to keep dairy farming sustainable," Albers said.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Tuesday, March 6, 2007:](#)

'Moral issue'

Jay Ambrose's Feb. 22 column, "Moral nonsense on global warming," is without merit.

Mr. Ambrose pontificates that he knows "reputable" scientists who "are advancing alternative explanations for the chief cause of global warming." Nowhere does he give their names, nor state criteria for calling someone "reputable." Nor does he tell us what those alternative explanations are. Thus, the reader cannot make an independent assessment regarding either the accuracy or

the truth of his pontifications. This is akin to President Bush's "trust me" regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or uranium from Niger.

His statement, "a lack of growth today means vastly reduced resources in the years ahead" is ludicrous since growth consumes more resources, especially considering global population growth.

If Mr. Ambrose believes his own nonsense, he should move to southern Florida, or a low lying oceanic island, and build a home a foot or two above sea level, remaining there while global warming continues to raise sea level.

Global warming's moral issue is whether or not we in the developed nations have the right to continue ignoring the damage we do to peoples in less-developed nations as we do little or nothing to decrease our carbon dioxide emissions.

Robert Merrill, Fresno

[Lodi News Sentinel, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, March 6, 2007](#)

Keep garbage dump out of Galt city limits

We don't need slums. We don't need garbage inside the city of Galt!

I and many other homeowners and residents have been under the false assumption that the city government was no longer going to put this transfer station (garbage dump) inside the city of Galt. I and others have been so misled as to where and what this "transfer station" will be and how much garbage it will be handling. They will be collecting 600 tons of garbage daily from areas of Northern San Joaquin County and southern Elk Grove, Wilton, etc.). Why should the city of Galt be made a garbage dump for the financial profits of a few? Put the garbage dump outside of town away from established homes and neighborhoods.

Galt citizens will be forced to suffer losses in lower property values, to pay more taxes for the upkeep of streets used by this horde of trucks and to pay increased city rates to support city-used facilities. The air quality will be an ugly and unhealthy stench for citizens to breathe. Flies, cockroaches, mice and rats will thrive and invade homes and businesses. Galt residents will be forced to sell out or live in unhealthy slum conditions.

I feel, as others do, that this Galt dump transfer station is a project created by some former City Council members and a former mayor that have used all the means at their disposal to promote this right under our noses. Even our local newspaper seems to be a part of this.

How? By not giving us timely informed information of what is being proposed and happening in our city until it is a done deal (like waived fees).

We shouldn't need to go to outside areas for help in our city. What we should have is a timely, informative and unbiased reporting newspaper for our community. And what we should have is more concerned city leaders and officials who will listen to the people of Galt and make decisions for these people by putting good common sense (not selfish personnel gains) into their decisions and actions, as the new city planning commissioners have done. Now, hopefully, the City Council of Galt will vote today for its people and vote out this horrible decision to make a garbage dump in the city of Galt, because to vote it out says, "I love Galt."

Leslie Esparsen - Galt

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, March 6, 2007:](#)

Make mandatory

I strongly support changes to the current fees for trash collection to promote greater curbside recycling. Having lived in other, more recycling-friendly communities before moving to Bakersfield, I was perplexed and disappointed that it would cost so much to recycle items such as glass, plastic and paper.

I chose to not pay the additional fee and have had to regularly cart my recyclables to a not-so-nearby recycling drop-off point in my vehicle, a practice that offsets the positive effort I make by [contributing to air pollution](#), traffic congestion and littering. It is time that the city council reconsiders how waste fees are set.

I believe that curbside recycling should be mandatory and provided as part of the regular trash service. I would support a reasonable adjustment to the current fees as long as all incentives and subsidies to not recycle are eliminated.

Although it may be desirable to grandfather in some of the current fee policies, these exceptions should not be indefinite and should expire in a reasonable and limited time, regardless of when a home is sold.

To allow some homeowners to persist in avoiding the recycling program is unfair. The overriding goal should be to divert as much recyclable material from landfills as is reasonably possible.

These changes should be accompanied by an effective community-wide education effort to assist residents in understanding how to comply with the program. Other nearby cities have overcome opposition and ignorance about recycling, so certainly there are good examples of successful programs the city could borrow from.

-- ERIC KELLEY, Bakersfield