

Air District seeks environmental justice advisors

Business Journal staff

(Fresno) Business Journal, Wed., May 26, 2010

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is currently taking applications to fill open seats on its Environmental Justice Advisory Group (EJAG).

EJAG provides advice and guidance to the district for implementing its Environmental Justice Strategy. With this policy, the district ensures all San Joaquin Valley residents benefit from healthier air as a result of the operation or execution of its programs, policies and activities.

There are 13 EJAG seats. Applications are being sought for three current vacancies: At-large county representatives for Tulare and Fresno and an ethnic, small-business owner. However, additional seats may become vacant during 2010, and thus the district is seeking new, general applications and acclamations for reappointment. Interested applicants need to be residents of the San Joaquin Valley, and must have experience and interest in representing ethnic and/or low-income communities.

Applications can be submitted to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, 1990 E Gettysburg, Fresno, CA 93726 by 5 p.m. Friday, June 25, 2010.

For more information about the Valley Air District, call a regional office: in Fresno, 559-230-6000;

County ups ante for greenwaste facility

By Gretchen Wenner, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, May 27, 2010

During their long meeting Tuesday -- much of it focused on budget discussions -- the Kern County Board of Supervisors also took action on other items.

The board denied a request to expand the allowable waste stream taken in by the Community Recycling and Resource Recovery Inc. facility outside Lamont.

The greenwaste composting operation, first OK'd in 1993, has long bothered residents of Lamont, Arvin, Weedpatch and Greenfield with smells, wind-blown trash and dumping of debris-laden compost on its fields.

Supervisor Don Maben agreed with a plea from the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, an environmental justice group, that Community Recycling should be completely enclosed.

In the end, the board voted to postpone a vote until June 22 but made clear it will require the company to prepare a full environmental report.

"We can't continue to do business the way we've done business" regarding air quality and other impacts, Maben said. The facility is in his district.

The company had asked to modify its permit so it could take in gypsum wallboard and "digestates," essentially sewage sludge from dairies and similar operations. It would have been the fourth such modification since the original permit was approved. No overall study of air, water and other impacts has ever been done.

Maben said the situation had become one of "death by a thousand cuts" and it was time for a full environmental review.

The 190-acre operation can take in up to 150 truckloads carrying 3,750 tons of waste a day. It has previously been fined by the county for significant permit violations.

Lorelei Oviatt, the county's planning director, told the board a city of Los Angeles pilot program for food-scrap waste, which includes some trash, is currently under way. Los Angeles wants to

ultimately bring 650 tons a day here because residents of Sun Valley have opposed bringing the waste to a facility there, Oviatt said.

[Lodi News Sentinel Commentary, Thursday, May 27, 2010](#)

I'm seeing red over traffic lights in Lodi

By Steve Hansen

Screeeeech! — The sound of locking brakes. In a flash, another traffic signal turns red in Lodi. Have you noticed how quickly some of these lights seem to change?

You might be traveling at the speed limit of 40 miles per hour. If a car comes to the intersection from a cross street, you can bet you'll probably have only a second or two until the yellow light appears.

I defy anyone to drive Downtown Church Street without hitting two or three instantly illuminating red lights.

Then, there's the other extreme: How about Cherokee Lane and Lodi Avenue? Sometimes, one can be sitting there for over a minute without a single car passing through. And now that Lodi Avenue is closed at that intersection, this traffic control timing makes even less sense.

Most experts agree that cars and trucks pollute the most when moving from a dead stop. When the light turns green, they also use the most gas. If we are so concerned about the environment, why not apply a little more common sense in setting these traffic control devices?

I'm sure the present system provides great business for brake repair shops and gasoline dealers. And while some companies are patting themselves on the back for painting their walls with "non-toxic" products or covering their floors with bamboo, multiple pounds of vehicle carbon pollutants are being spewed into the air at stoplights. It seems we are doing "feel good" operations, while the big picture escapes from view.

Now, I realize that synchronization of traffic lights to the speed limit is an expensive venture. No doubt, money is not in the city budget for this proposition. It would be nice to get federal stimulus dollars. However, I'm sure that money is being used more wisely by turning federal buildings into green palaces or by restarting coal-burning plants in Illinois.

But maybe there is something the city can do to improve this gas-wasting, polluting hazard without spending big bucks. How about five to eight seconds before a light changes? Lodi seems to have the shortest amount of time as compared to other towns and cities. How about applying an equal standard to Lodi Avenue and Cherokee Lane?

There are probably "professionals" out there who will claim this change would only encourage speeding, red-light running and cause more accidents. But my guess is that the opposite could be argued as well. Frustration, from constant unreasonable stop-and-go activity, could also cause impulsive drivers to violate these intersections as well.

How about a study of other cities to see how they adjust their traffic lights for a compromise of safety and environmental factors?

I'll admit, I'm no expert on the subject. This is just my opinion, based on observations of everyday road conditions.

But can't we use just a little more common sense when dealing with traffic control, as well as our concerns for the environment?

There just has to be a better way.

Steve Hansen is a Lodi writer and satirist.