

Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors Watch

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, March 8, 2011

About 53 streetlights near north McHenry Avenue car dealerships and other companies would go dark for five years under a proposal before Stanislaus County leaders.

Losing two-thirds of the North McHenry Lighting District's streetlights is the price for property owners refusing higher taxes, a staff report says.

It will take five years of saving on power bills to fix the district's \$25,000 deficit, the document says. The district is made up of dozens of businesses on 234 parcels near McHenry and Kiernan, Pelandale and Bangs avenues north of Modesto.

Lights at intersections are most important; those midblock or in cul-de-sacs are most likely to go, the report says. The plan is on today's consent agenda for Stanislaus County supervisors, meaning discussion only if someone requests it.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. in the basement chamber at Tenth Street Place, 1010 10th St., Modesto.

In other agenda items, supervisors are scheduled to:

- [Review a downsized version of Gerry Kamilos' vision for West Park, an industrial hub on a former air base near Crows Landing. Kamilos seeks a 15-month extension, allowing his team to complete environment studies for what would be a 2,800-acre complex, down 2,000 acres from a previous proposal.](#)
- Receive notice from state environmental experts on a plan to remove toxic soil where school officials hope to expand a special education campus. Testing shows contamination from arsenic and several types of pesticides at a maintenance yard near John F. Kennedy School, run by the Stanislaus County Office of Education at Nadine Avenue and Stonum Road in Ceres. A DDT reading was 150 times higher than safe, according to a state advisory; the school's 140 students are not exposed, director of operations Kathy Lasiter said. The expansion could add up to 160 more disabled students. The state recommends excavating 100 truckloads and hauling to landfills near Livermore and Kettleman City, costing \$137,000 covered by the state. A public comment period closes March 30; input can be sent to jluevano@dtsc.ca.gov.
- Apply for a \$230,500 state grant aimed at reducing incarceration of girls held for nonviolent offenses. Of 264 girls in Juvenile Hall in 2010, 127, or 48 percent, were suspected of violating probation, failing to appear in court or other infractions. The grant would pay for gender-specific training, a report says.
- Apply for a \$48,525 state grant for enhanced supervision by probation officers of 181 people convicted of felony drunken driving. The grant would cover 1,040 hours of overtime needed for searches, alcohol and drug testing, stakeouts and DUI checkpoints.

Third suit filed against Friant Ranch project

By Kurtis Alexander, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Monday, March 7, 2011

Three more groups joined the legal battle against Fresno County over Friant Ranch on Monday when they filed a joint lawsuit challenging the county's consent for the 2,500-home development.

In papers submitted in Fresno County Superior Court, the League of Women Voters of Fresno County, the Sierra Club and Revive the San Joaquin claim that the proposed retirement community 10 miles north of Fresno would burden a rural area with unwanted traffic and [air pollution](#).

"It's not smart growth," said Gary Lasky, a vice-chairman of the Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter. "This project is unaffordable both for the harm it causes to the health and safety of the public and it's going to be expensive for the taxpayer ... with new roads, sewer and water supplies."

The concerns are similar to those expressed by the city of Fresno and the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, which filed separate suits on Friday. All three challenges seek to halt the proposed development until potential effects are better addressed.

County attorneys could not be reached to comment Monday. But on Friday they said they would not discuss Friant Ranch until the legal challenges had been fully reviewed.

The county Board of Supervisors, which approved the project's environmental impact report on Feb. 1, has maintained that the development would bring needed senior housing to the region and help spruce up the struggling Friant area.

"Obviously I believe in smart growth," said county Supervisor Henry Perea. But "you're talking about taking up non-prime ag land for development and providing homes."

The environmental report is a key hurdle in the permitting process. However, the developers, the Bigelow-Silkwood family, still need a handful of approvals before starting construction. They have said they intend to break ground in three years.

In addition to housing, the proposal includes shops, offices and a village center.

[Modesto Bee editorial Sunday, March 6, 2011:](#)

Lawmakers reveal their work

For more information on any bill, go to www.sen.ca.gov and click on "Legislation." Type in the bill number or author.

SEN. ANTHONY CANNELLA

Republican — 12th District Term: First

- SB 358 — Provides companies greater incentives to fulfill our state's air quality regulations ahead of schedule and in excess of the minimum requirements by exempting from state income taxes grant funding provided by the state Air Resources Board.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CATHLEEN GALGIANI

Democrat, 17th District Term: Third

- AB 347 — Requires the California Air Resources Board to ensure that the cement, glass manufacturing, soda ash manufacturing, and steel production sectors receive offset credits for early action on energy efficiency or energy reduction projects which reduced carbon dioxide emissions prior to the passage of the Global Warming Act.
- AB 1113 — Establishes a program for those converting biomass, including livestock and poultry waste, to provide power. This measure will provide a waste disposal option for animal agriculture, thereby protecting surface and ground water and air quality.

ASSEMBLYMAN BILL BERRYHILL

Republican — 26th District Serving: Second term in Assembly.

- AB 1095 – Similar to AB 763, this bill would provide for an alternative dispute resolution process with the Air Resources Board. Currently businesses who are fined by the ARB have no path of recourse to fairly dispute such charges, even on factual discrepancies. This bill would provide a fair process to do so. (A similar bill last year was killed in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, where they cited a state cost for the bill being too high, even though the bill stipulated that applicants would have to pay for the process.)

- AB 1256 – Intended to require the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to reimburse the Central Valley Air Quality Management District for pollution that migrates from the Bay Area to the Central Valley.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Tuesday, March 8, 2011:](#)

Rail project will benefit ag

By John Diener

We have a lot to be proud of here in the San Joaquin Valley. We grow the world's food and fight water shortages, temperamental weather and constantly changing conditions to do so.

Our rich agricultural heritage is full of stories of innovation and adaptation and of smart, capable people rising to meet challenges head-on. In fact, some technologies pioneered right here in the Valley have made modern farming and ranching possible.

Our ability to embrace new technology and apply it to our work is something we should embrace and celebrate.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority recently announced that it would start construction of its statewide system right here in the Valley. This is another chance for us to show that we can accomplish big things and embrace new technology. It will create good jobs for our families, clean our air and provide a vital link between here and the rest of the state.

It's no secret that our air quality is among the worst in the nation and we should welcome any technology or infrastructure improvement that can improve it.

We will be the first to reap the benefits of the construction, engineering, design-build and other jobs. Once the statewide system is built our entire economy will benefit from the increased mobility it brings.

Rail has been moving through the Valley for more than 100 years. The first lines represented progress and economic vitality, just as high-speed rail does today.

We need high-speed rail. Building a statewide system will create thousands of temporary and permanent jobs in the Valley. You don't have to look far to see how devastating unemployment has affected every corner of this region and we must support job-creating projects like high-speed rail.

If we dig our heels in and say "no," or impede its construction, we will miss an incredible opportunity to show the rest of the state and nation that together we can do big things, embrace new technology and preserve our way of life.

Although many people believe that building a high-speed rail network will disrupt agriculture, I believe that developing high-speed rail will preserve farming in the Valley. Building high-speed trains displaces less land and will create fewer long-term problems for our farms and ranches.

Our Valley was built on family farms and the tradition of passing our farms from generation to generation. Building a statewide rail system will only enhance our ability to preserve agriculture and ensure our kids will farm in the Valley just like we do.

California is growing and will have a population near 50 million by 2030 and much of that growth is right here. We are going to have to improve or upgrade our infrastructure to accommodate this growth.

Building high-speed rail requires less land than new freeways or highways which will ensure that the most productive farmland in the nation stays that way. The more congested our freeways

become due to population growth, the longer it will take for our products to get to market and our transportation costs will increase. High-speed rail will ease the number of cars traveling throughout the Valley, clearing much-needed freeway space for trucks.

Agriculture has some very real concerns about the impacts high-speed rail will have on farming. Whenever we take on a large project like Highway 99 or I-5, there are always concerns and issues to be worked out. But I strongly believe that if we work in good faith with the High-Speed Rail Authority we can reach solutions that benefit us all.

An open and honest dialogue is the only way the California High-Speed Rail Authority and members of the agriculture community can work together to address our concerns including land-use, wind and impacts to irrigation systems.

John Diener is a local farmer who grows a variety of crops near Five Points in Fresno County.