

## **Government roundup: Stockdale Ranch up**

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, May 18, 2010

The Bakersfield City Council is slated to vote on the Stockdale Ranch project at its Wednesday night meeting.

The council will decide whether to certify the 564-acre development's environmental report and OK numerous land-use changes. Local Sierra Club representatives have expressed opposition, citing concerns about air quality, farmland conversion and traffic impacts. City planning staff recommends approval.

Property owners Castle & Cooke California Inc. and Bolthouse Properties LLC plan for about 3,580 residential units and more than 941,000 square feet of commercial and business uses. The proposed development sits on a long rectangle located on the south side of Stockdale Highway, west of city limits at Claudia Autumn Drive and north of the Cross Valley Canal. The western boundary is the future extension of Nord Avenue. The site is in the process of being annexed into the city.

Council members will also hear budget presentations from several city departments gearing up for the new fiscal year, which starts July 1.

The city council meets at 5:15 p.m. Wednesday in chambers at City Hall, 1501 Truxtun Ave.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Tuesday, May 18, 2010:](#)

### **Unopposed Maggard is well deserving of his 3rd District seat**

Mike Maggard is all alone on the June ballot, which is unfortunate on one level but appropriate on another. Unopposed or not, he has earned our support for another term as 3rd District representative on the Kern County Board of Supervisors.

Maggard, who is completing his first four-year term in county government after having served for eight years on the Bakersfield City Council, has been a forceful voice for responsibility and reason throughout his time in public service.

Maggard has fought for reasonable growth and planning standards, even in the face of well-funded opposition to his common-sense positions. He has advocated for sensible infrastructure development, helped create a redevelopment agency in Oildale, and was at the fore of the much-needed investigation of Kern Health Systems' financial practices. Maggard helped in the establishment of the county's compliance and accountability officer, was among those demanding that the Big West refinery be more accountable for safety lapses, and played a central role in the difficult 2009-2010 budget negotiations.

There's much work to be done, especially in directing the county through a difficult and challenging budgetary year that will include layoffs and diminished services. The southern valley's air is still among the worst in the nation, and pollution-related ailments, including asthma and heart disease are still unacceptably high. But if anyone can be expected to apply common-sense, businesslike approaches to those and others persistent issues, it is Maggard. He deserves our support June 8.

[Fresno Bee, Commentary, Tuesday, May 18, 2010:](#)

### **No free pass on ag burning**

By Dean Florez

For nearly 60 years, California agriculture was handed a free pass to pollute the air.

Even as the San Joaquin Valley emerged as the smoggiest region in the nation, farmers continued to enjoy a special status, burning their uprooted trees and vines in big bonfires and plowing their fields into great clouds of dust.

Agriculture's exemption from air pollution laws was supposed to end in 2003. I know because I wrote the legislation banning open field burning and other arcane farm practices that were making our air even more intolerable to breathe. Farmers were given plenty of time -- until June 2010 -- to wean themselves from burning.

But now on the eve of this deadline, our local air pollution control district is pulling a fast one. At the behest of the most reactionary members of the farm lobby, the air district is ignoring the very emissions that cause so many heart attacks and premature deaths in the valley and force our schoolchildren to never leave home without their steroid inhalers.

Using voodoo economics and shoddy science, the air district wants to allow the biggest polluters in farming to continue their old habits. If the district gets its way, more than 90% of the smoke and soot from open field burning will continue to foul the air and cost us taxpayers untold millions in health care.

What makes this 11th-hour loophole so cynical is that many conscientious farmers, in good faith, have taken the necessary steps to stop burning. These farmers need to be applauded as an example for the rest of the industry. Instead, the district's double-cross sends the exact wrong message at a time when we desperately need to reduce both ozone and particulate pollution to meet federal requirements.

The staff report justifying the continued burning of farm waste is full of false assumptions and dishonest calculations. It is, quite simply, rigged to make the case that many farmers cannot afford to send their uprooted vines and trees to biomass plants or turn their pruned material into compost.

Here is how the air district snubs science and arrives at a prearranged conclusion sought by the old guard of farm polluters:

The report greatly inflates a farmer's cost of maintaining a vineyard or orchard, concluding that vines and nut trees must be removed every 10 years. No grape farmer or almond grower in his right mind would replace his vineyard or orchard after 10 years. The typical lifespan is more than double that.

The report concludes that only an almond grower with more than 3,500 acres of trees -- a \$35 million investment -- can afford to shred his prunings. In the district's eyes, an almond grower with, say, 2,000 acres -- a mere \$20 million investment -- cannot afford to use a custom shredder, which costs \$35 an acre. These "economically strapped" growers will be allowed to continue burning.

The report lumps together the smallest raisin grower making a \$300 an acre profit with the largest table grape grower making a \$3,000 an acre profit. It allows the big guy to continue burning based on the premise that the small guy cannot afford to remove the trellis wires and send his uprooted vines to a biomass plant.

The report badly underestimates the capacity of biomass plants to handle all types of green farm waste, especially the removal of citrus orchards. The report counts only nine biomass plants serving the Valley when, in fact, there are a dozen. And it fails to credit these plants with tens of millions of dollars in upgrades to handle even more farm material.

The air district board, which will take up the matter on Thursday, seems poised to give the most hidebound voices in agriculture a new free pass. If this happens, I intend to hold a special senate hearing and call on the state air resources board to reject the district's cooked-up findings.

Already, though, I fear the wrong signal has been sent. Last week, as I ran my familiar path through the almond groves outside Shafter, I came upon a large black smirch in the earth. A farmer not known for burning had piled high his prunings, poured gasoline and lit a match.

What had billowed into the sky was gone. Only the smolder of embers remained.

*Dean Florez, D-Shafter, is a state senator representing the 16th District.*