

## Ratepayer Gathering Notes

**Wednesday, May 8, 2019      The Library – Guests: Bill Berkley – Hydroponic Farming**

**In attendance: Alan Danaw, Liesel Paris, Mary Ann Lord, Judy Lewis, Jim Lewis, Jennie Edwards, William Bonnell, Rebecca Falk, Kathy Dice, Gary Edwards, Ginger Dunlap Dietz, Karyn Barnett**

Our four main concerns, beliefs, objectives:

- We believe that BWD/Ratepayers should be allocated an initial **minimum** of 1700 AFY; this allocation should be excluded from any reductions.
- We believe that the 20-year implementation period set out under SGMA should be shortened; by doing so:
  - we will greatly increase the probability of reasonably priced water of better quality –ongoing monitoring for water quality is essential for our population;
  - we will minimize the ongoing decimation of our groundwater dependent ecosystems, which consist of flora and fauna whose success must be considered in the overall water allocation calculus.

### Future scheduled meetings:

Tuesday, May 14      5-6:00 pm      The Library      **Letter-writing campaign**

Thursday, May 22      5-6:00 pm      The Library      **Jim Wermers**

Wednesday, May 29      5-6:00 pm      The Library      **Joint BWD-Ratepayer meeting**

\*\*\* Reminder: May 21 is the deadline for submitting questions/comments to the GSA:

County of San Diego Planning & Development Services  
C/O: Jim Bennett  
5510 Overland Avenue Suite 310  
San Diego, CA 92123

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Will begin, as always, with my disclaimer: these notes are not minutes, they are some recollections of what was presented (and some commentary along the way.) In this case, I'll ask Bill Berkley for some forgiveness first, for the delay in preparing the notes, and second, for the whatever inaccuracies I've conveyed. Also would like to thank Bill once again for his fine presentation, willingness to address our questions openly and frankly, and wish him great success in this interesting and compelling venture.

Bill began his presentation by stating the Borrego Springs is under assault by SGMA and by FEMA at the same time. An interesting way to condense the two biggest issues we face right now: SGMA will radically change what has been Borrego for decades, and that FEMA, and its outdated and perhaps inaccurate flood mapping, has been the cause of much of our economic slowdown, particularly with respect to the building industry in Borrego Springs over the last decade or more.

Bill also addressed the issue of the Borrego Springs Resort (BSR), particularly since current rumors have it that RH once again has plans to purchase (or at least bid on) the resort, stating that BSR is in non-compliance with FEMA regulations involving flood plain issues. Apparently, it will cost between \$2.5 and \$10 million to bring the resort into compliance; his belief is that in all probability it will be an outside venture that will once again purchase the resort without fully understanding the complexities and costs involved, as a result of the extremely low cost of the property.

Bill stated that RH is limited to 800 AFY for its golf course, and now is using approximately 700 AFY. RH is in the process of purchasing and has purchased a total of 3 farms so far (Burnand – 250 acres; Fortiner – 120 acres; D. Young – well,) reminding us that when purchasing acre feet of water one has to buy 4 times the amount because of SGMA (GSP's) mandated reduction of 76%; thus, to obtain 250 AFY, you have to buy 1000 AFY.

The presentation itself elicited much interesting conversation; rather than trying to replicate the program, I'd suggest going to the following "Very Clean Food" website:

<http://www.verycleanfoods.com/the-team.html>

Essentially, this hydroponics system, involves growing fruits and vegetables in a fully controlled environment (glass containers.) The nutrients/fertilizer are provided by fish, which are also raised in a controlled environment. The light spectrum and temperature are controlled by specially designed glass, solar panels and storage batteries. The refractive quality of the glass as well as the amount of light allowed into the growing environment is controlled as well.

The process uses less than 1% of the water used by desert citrus farmers. Crop cycles are much shorter (a head of lettuce can be grown in 21 days.) The water is cycled through the process and not wasted. Because the fertilizing environment is separate from the plant growing environment, the plant does not need to be washed, thus saving more water. Vegetables are sold with roots, which gives them a longer shelf life. No pesticides or herbicides are used.

Bill's company tried to establish their farm in the Borrego Valley, but it was FEMA and its floodplain regulations that caused them to move to Nyland, where they work in conjunction with a fish farmer. FEMA would have required them to raise their containers four feet above ground. That, in addition to the cost of water and SDG&E power, made them rethink and relocate.

We concluded the gathering by briefly addressing the matter of "opportunity zones" (Diane Johnson raised the question in absentia;) Bill had addressed the idea in the Desmond meeting.

An Opportunity Zone is an **economically-distressed community** where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. The community has to be nominated to become one.

The following is an intelligible site where you can see what this might mean to our community:

[http://virtuapartners.com/opportunity-zones/?utm\\_source=bing&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=&utm\\_term=opportunity%20zone&mkwid= pcrd 77103307937555\\_pkw\\_opportunity%20zones\\_pmt\\_be\\_pdv\\_c\\_slid\\_&adgroup=&st-t=bing&vt-](http://virtuapartners.com/opportunity-zones/?utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=&utm_term=opportunity%20zone&mkwid= pcrd 77103307937555_pkw_opportunity%20zones_pmt_be_pdv_c_slid_&adgroup=&st-t=bing&vt-)

[k=opportunity+zones&msclkid=c0bb95d81582155f5857c901bda0fb3b&gclid=CNjPw\\_aCmeICFWizswodm2kPtg&gclid=ds](https://www.google.com/search?q=k=opportunity+zones&msclkid=c0bb95d81582155f5857c901bda0fb3b&gclid=CNjPw_aCmeICFWizswodm2kPtg&gclid=ds)