

## Ratepayer Gathering Notes

Thursday, May 23, 2019

The Library – Guest: Jim Wermers

**In attendance: Heather Davidson, Jim Roller, Linda Roller, Marsha Boring, Wayne Boring, Lee Scharf, Gary Edwards, Kathy Dice, Bill Bonnell, Joanne Sims, Jack Sims, Mike Wells, Liesel Paris, Betsy Knaak, Jolanda DeLuca**

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 halt the depletion of the aquifer;
  - we will greatly increase the probability of reasonably priced water of better quality –systematic 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:

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

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We were fortunate to have Jim Wermers speak to us on Thursday. After his years of involvement in the community and his work with the Borrego Water Coalition (BWD) in search of a solution to the severe overdraft of our subbasin, it was clear that he would provide particular insight to, and an understanding of the upcoming needs of our town, along with a special vision of how to address them.

**Borrego Water Coalition** - [http://www.borregospringschamber.com/bwc/public\\_meetings.htm](http://www.borregospringschamber.com/bwc/public_meetings.htm)

**Borrego Water Coalition - Basin Management Objectives and Strategies. 2014.**

<file:///C:/Users/gary/Documents/BWD%20AC/Borrego%20Water%20Coalition%20Basin%20Management%202014.pdf>

When I asked Jim if he would be willing to be our guest, he first wanted to be clear about our position regarding the GSP and SGMA in general. It was only after he heard where we stand and what our objectives are that he agreed to come to our gathering and share his perspective; he did indicate that he applauded our stance and that he would try to bring further ideas to the table. He certainly did not disappoint.

(My regular disclaimer: the following are simply notes, some of the things I remember better than others, and maybe some altered by my own interests and outlooks. If you feel there is something essential I've missed, write me and I'll send it out to all.)

The gathering did turn into an interesting and stimulating conversation, which he led with all sorts of ideas, suggestions and reflections:

- The process towards resolving the overdraft should have started five years ago (an agreement was reached by the BWC in 2014.)
- How are existing water-metered undeveloped lots being dealt with; these owners have already purchased the right to water and have that expectation as part of their investment. BWD has sold a commitment. How many lots/undeveloped meters are there?
- Should BWD manage the water? (SGMA recommends a Water Master.)
- Is there a community master plan envisioned from the perspective of available water?
- There is room for agriculture in the valley; but this must be ag that succeeds with less water and a diminished carbon footprint.
- According to the folks in ag in the Valley, ag does not make a profit here.
- BWD indicated it was precluded from buying water when D. Young's farm was available for something in the neighborhood of \$2,500/acre. How did that happen? What's the difference now?
- Buy the land/water now, and worry about rehabilitation later – resolve the immediate issue first.

The foremost goal must be to implement whatever plan there is as quickly as possible (a goal the ratepayers fully support.) Save the aquifer.

The economic solution is not complicated or expensive in the long run.

There should be a committee dedicated to determining what Borrego Springs will/should look like by 2040, one based on our limited water allocation. This is an item I'd like to follow up at a later meeting: sounds like an idea with a lot of traction in our group.

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Folks, the joint BWD/Ratepayer meeting on Wednesday, May 29 could be an interesting one. Please come prepared to ask the BWD attorney and the finance person any question you might have. <sup>1</sup>So far, BWD as provided me with not agenda. I'll press Geoff tomorrow for something and will get back to you with my reminder.

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<sup>1</sup> You might want to review the quotations I gathered from the letters to the GSA I just sent you; there is a lot of information that needs to be clarified, some of which BWD should be able to respond to.