

Ranchos employee asks town: When is enough, enough?

By now, most of us are tired of the town of Apple Valley promoting a takeover of Apple Valley Ranchos Water Company through eminent domain because they think "it's better for the greater good of the people."

Many people are asking the Town Council, "why are you doing this, because the cost will outweigh the intended benefit." The answer I continue to hear from the Council is "a number of the Town Council ran for reelection on the platform that they would do something about the water rates."

I guess the council is trying to do what they said they were going to do, that shows integrity, except they have said they cannot lower water rates. They will "stabilize the rates." How? Where is the plan to stabilize rates? Anyone can say they will stabilize the water rates, but where is the homework showing the people that you can? We elected the Council based on what they said without any plan; that was our fault. The Town Council does not decide the price of the water company they are attempting to take over — a jury does if it goes all the way through the court, since Ranchos isn't for sale to the Town. So it is impossible for them to know how much Ranchos is going to cost. They didn't do their homework.

The Town had an appraiser do an appraisal with a low-ball value that even the Town Council lifted an eyebrow at. This appraisal was paid for by our tax dollars. Now the Town has paid for an EIR (environmental impact report) and more of our tax dollars are being spent. The Town Council is going to continue to spend the taxpayers' money until they can find some way to rationalize using eminent domain to take over the water company. The council has "budgeted" \$3.2 million dollars for this misguided effort. Where is that money coming from? What happens when that \$3.2 million is gone? The consultants and attorneys for both sides are the only ones that benefit from this craziness — not you and me.

In the meantime, Ranchos continues to serve the public as it has for nearly 70 years making necessary improvements to the system and investing in the community not only in the water system but also other programs like PALS, the schools and many others. This government can't do it better regardless of what they claim.

When is enough, enough? How much more money and fighting will go on before we the people say: Enough! Stop the insanity.

Ranchos is a good company with committed people that work and live in this town. I am proud to work at Ranchos and live in this town but I am concerned about our government irresponsibly spending our tax dollars.

— *Kevin Phillips, Manager of Safety Services for Apple Valley Ranchos Water Company*

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