

EAST PALO ALTO

City wants to take over sewer district

District leaders against the idea

by Don Kazak

East Palo Alto city officials want to consider absorbing the East Palo Alto Sanitary District, but district officials don't want any part of it.

The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to direct a consultant to update a 1997 study which looked

at absorbing different special districts into the city. Already, the city has assumed operation of a water district.

For sanitary district officials, this isn't a new issue, and one they don't especially like.

The district passed a resolution back in May, on a 4-1 vote, to remain

independent.

"(Mayor) Duane Bay had already made statements to that effect," said Dennis Scherzer, general manager of the district. "We wanted to let him know we wanted to maintain our sovereignty."

The district provides sewer services to much, but not all, of East Palo Alto. The West Bay Sanitary District, headquartered in Menlo Park, provides services to the rest of the city.

"It's been a long-standing agenda item, since incorporation (in 1983)," Bay said. "And it was a recommendation" of a city consultant in 1997.

With a City Council election coming in November and a guaranteed two new members — since two

incumbents are not seeking reelection — Bay said the council wanted to get the updated study done in case the new council wants to absorb the sanitary district.

"If the new council doesn't want it or doesn't have the political will, it won't move forward," he said.

The district, with just eight staff members and a \$2 million budget, has been more politically visible than most sewer districts. One-third of the 15 elected officials in the city are on the sanitary district board (the others are on the City Council and Ravenswood City School District board).

The district had been the subject of scandals in years past, with one

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The Memorial Grove was established to honor the memories of those who lost their lives on Sept. 11, 2001. It was dedicated in October 2001.

A new bench and plaque will be installed prior to Sept. 11, 2002, as part a series of planned enhancements. *Eleanor Pardee Park, 851 Center Drive, Palo Alto. Open sunrise to 10:30 p.m.*

Three Churches, One Cause

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish (St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Our Lady of the Rosary Church, and St. Albert the Great Church) in Palo Alto will hold regularly scheduled and special services on Sept. 11 in a spirit of remembrance, healing and reflection.

St. Thomas Aquinas Church bells will toll at 8:45 a.m. in memory of when the

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Sanitary district

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former member jailed for financial wrongdoing and another recalled by voters. Different factions in the city's politics have vied for control of the board, and the district or its members have sometimes challenged land use decisions made by the city.

Two of its board members in the

past have run for seats on the City Council, as one, Samuel Rasheed, is doing this year.

Bay noted that the district has sought support from a state association of sanitary districts and has hired a public-relations consultant. "They are not taking this lightly," Bay said.

But Scherzer questioned whether consolidating the district into the city made sense financially. "It would be

more cost effective, in terms of economies of scale, to consolidate with West Bay or the city of Palo Alto (which both run sewer systems)," Scherzer said.

Bay said he would be willing to look at consolidating the part of West Bay Sanitary District that provides service to East Palo Alto.

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