

Sanitary District asks West Bay to take over its operations

By Phyllis Brown
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MENLO PARK—The East Palo Alto Sanitary District has asked the West Bay Sanitary District to take over its operations. West Bay District Manager Steven Ford said he received the request in a letter from Sanitary District President Joseph Sanders. "The East Palo Alto Sanitary District Board of Directors would like to know if it is feasible for the West Bay Sanitary District to take up the operations of the East Palo Alto Sanitary District," Sanders said in the February 24 letter. "If the answer is yes, please have the

(West Bay) Board of Directors inform us as to... the procedure we must follow to complete the transaction," the letter reads. East Palo Alto Sanitary District Manager and Board Secretary Clarence Hynes said Monday the district wants to be annexed to West Bay "because we would like to see the district managed by somebody who knows how to manage it." If the East Palo Alto April 13 incorporation election is successful, the East Palo Alto Sanitary District would become a department of the new city. Sewer fees have been deemed crucial to East Palo Alto's economic viability. But Hynes, who favors annexing East Palo

Alto to Menlo Park, said he believes a city-run district would function poorly. Hynes also said "we have known for a long, long time that there are better ways to run it than the way we are running it. That isn't for the people's sake, but for our sakes. There are only three of us running it now," he said. Hynes said the East Palo Alto Sanitary District provides sewer service to East Palo Alto south of Bay Road and has 3,500 connection. The West Bay Sanitary District serves more than 55,000 persons in a 13 square mile area encompassing Menlo Park and portions of Redwood City, Atherton, Portola

Valley, Woodside, East Palo Alto and other unincorporated areas in south San Mateo County. West Bay operates some 350 miles of pipelines and treats an average of more than 5.5 million gallons of wastewater each day. Hynes said Sanders' request definitely is a serious one. He said the East Palo Alto District is awaiting West Bay's reply. West Bay Manager Steven Ford said the district Board of Directors will discuss it at its March 8 meeting. Ford said the board never has sought to annex other districts, and has not taken a

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stance either on annexing this district or on East Palo Alto's incorporation. To annex to West Bay the East Palo Alto District must petition the San Mateo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). It is unlikely that the commission will consider any such proposals until after the April 13 incorporation election. A request to annex the area of East Palo Alto west of the Bayshore Freeway and North of Euclid Avenue to Menlo Park already has been put on hold by the Board of Supervisors, because no

property tax transfer agreement between the city and county was reached. A property tax transfer agreement between West Bay and East Palo Alto also must be reached before the East Palo Alto district can petition LAFCO, according to LAFCO Executive Officer B. Sherman Coffman. But, even if such an agreement is reached, LAFCO may not have time to hear it before the April 13 election. LAFCO will meet once this month March 17. It will not meet again until April 17. No Sanitary District petition has yet been submitted to LAFCO, and the issue is not on the commission agenda.

Even if it were put on LAFCO's agenda, the commission might chose to continue it until after the election. "I would be surprised if they were even to act on it," Commissioner Malcolm Dudley said "The election is only a month away," he said. The East Palo Alto District could ask to contract services with the West Bay Sanitary District. Sanders petitioned LAFCO in January to be removed from the incorporation proceedings. That request has been denied. The district also has been accused by Municipal Councilman Berkley Driessel of not allowing sewer hook-ups, in order to impede incorporation.