

SAM board agrees to progress infrastructure budget

By August Howell
May 31, 2023

- ▶ **Government body:** Sewer Authority Mid-coastside

- ▶ **Time and date:** 7 p.m., May 22

- ▶ **Members present:** Kathryn Slater-Carter, Barbara Dye, Deborah Ruddock, Deborah Penrose, Peter Dekker, Matthew Clark.

- ▶ **Staff present:** General Manager Kishen Prathivadi, General Counsel Jeremy Jungreis, Superintendent Tim Costello.

- ▶ **Budget:** After a series of delays and disagreements, the board unanimously agreed to send the proposed fiscal year 2023-24 budget to the three member agencies for consideration. Half Moon Bay Director Debbie Ruddock said that the city would again pay for its portion of the budget under protest, and proposed that prior to June 6, when the City Council discusses the budget.

The agencies will discuss crafting a stipulation that could mean GCSD and MWSD would pay Half Moon Bay for costs related to replacing the Montara Force Main if the city wins its lawsuit against the two agencies. SAM is due to adopt its budget by July 1.

The city's protest stems from a disagreement about including a project replacing the Montara force main, the northernmost section of the Intertie Pipeline System, in next year's infrastructure budget. The city has sued the other member agencies in court claiming it's not responsible for maintaining the IPS because the city's ratepayers do not benefit from it. As proposed, SAM's \$9.2 million operating budget includes \$3.5 million for infrastructure, most of which will be used on the Montara force main replacement.

► **First Flush:** The San Mateo Resource Conservation District presented the 2022 results of its First Flush program, a volunteer-driven water sampling effort at 13 outfall sites from Pacifica to Half Moon Bay meant to identify what pollutants are most common on the coast. Grace Allen, an RCD water quality project manager, said the samples were collected on Sept. 21. For the first time in the program's history, RCD tested for 12 types of pesticides and found only one, Pendimethalin, at Denniston Creek. RCD staff explained it is a selective herbicide for broadleaf weeds and grassy weeds. The health risk is low for humans but it can potentially harm some plants and animals. Elsewhere, E. coli concentrations were above recommended levels at all but San Vicente Creek and Montara. Zinc, lead and total suspended solids were within recommended ranges at all sites.

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► **Buying boilers:** The board approved the purchase of two new gas and water boilers, one of which is meant to replace one that's no longer up to code. The purchase is meant to be less than \$500,000. One boiler runs while the other is a backup. Staff say the boilers are essential to heat the "digester sludge" between 95 and 96 degrees. This

allows microbes to break down fecal matter. If SAM doesn't supply the boilers with enough gas, it will violate its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit and potentially face penalties.

Recently, Bay Area Air Quality Management District stated that SAM's ailing boiler was polluting above acceptable limits. SAM is unwilling to run without a backup, and staff say contractors can't repair the damaged one and will have to replace it entirely.

► **Quote of the day:** "We'd like to see this done upfront. And we aren't willing to pay additional costs." Slater-Carter on the ongoing dispute between GCSD and MWSD versus Half Moon Bay on how to pay for remodeling the Montara force main.

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