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Art, Community & Education



**Find Out What's
Happening**

**Check out the
second section**

Section II is filled with
information about arts,

Project Would Convert Sludge to Energy

By Ron McNicoll

A 16-member Bay Area coalition that includes Livermore and Dublin San Ramon Services District (DSRSD) hopes to obtain a \$2 million federal grant to study conversion of their wastewater treatment plants' sludge to electricity. Use of green waste would be included in the project.

The Bay Area Biosolids to Energy Project is applying for the appropriations request for fiscal year 2011/12 through California senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein. The Dublin

City Council has endorsed the request.

Sludge is the solid material left over from wastewater treatment. DSRSD assistant general manager Dave Requa said that his agency dries the sludge, and leaves it on the plant property, which is in Pleasanton.

Requa said that eventually the site will be filled up. Some other disposal method will be needed. The bio-solids project looks like a good alternative, if it were found to be feasible.

A few years ago, DSRSD

studied the cost of trucking sludge outside the county, where it would be placed on agricultural fields in either San Joaquin or Solano counties. That's an expensive trip. Current sites may become more restricted, even shut off, for use as sludge fields, even though no crops are growing there.

Solano County passed a resolution more than two years ago that calls for all sludge-spreading treatment plants to switch to some process involving waste-to-energy in three more years.

It is also expensive to truck sludge to sites outside the county. Then, too, the trucks themselves add to the pollution problem. The farther they go, the more greenhouse gases are emitted.

METHANE GAS IS A PROBLEM

The other big factor is the waste treatment process itself. Methane gas is produced from decaying material at the treatment plants. Some of it is recovered late in the decay cycle as heat or power, but only for the use at the plants themselves.

Much more methane remains. With the right technology, more of it could be reclaimed. There could be enough to convert the methane to more electricity, perhaps even enough for an agency to sell it to nearby customers and create fuel for trucks. This is already being done in projects operated at landfills, which also produce methane gas from the decaying deposits at their sites.

Waste Management's landfill in the Altamont began its own gas-to-energy project last No-

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BABZE

Council Keeps Del...

LVPAC

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and am pleased that both the Bankhead and regional theaters have received growing support from the Livermore community over these past months."

Wente also announced that Len Alexander, LVPAC's original Executive Director, has agreed to return to the organization's senior leadership position. "Len's experience with presenting Broadway productions and his knowledge of performing arts center op-

erations across the country will serve LVPAC well as we move forward with our two theaters," Wente stated. Currently Acting Director for External Affairs, Alexander has been working with the LVPAC board and staff to secure individual and corporate contributions toward the construction of the regional theater with more than \$11.3 million currently in hand.

STATE OF THE CITY

(continued from page one)

grams in the Tri-Valley. The new funding, if obtained, would help put eight or 10 such families in housing the first year, and five annually afterward. There would be the added benefit of creating local jobs for the housing refurbishment. The housing would also be of green construction, an added benefit to the home-buyer and the environment at large.

"It's not a panacea. We can't solve (all of the problems)." The city can work to solve of them, she said.

In her speech, the mayor pointed out that 40 California cities, including San Anselmo, South San Francisco and Petaluma have entered "a state of severe hardship." Pleasanton is in good shape, because it was able to cut costs by leaving jobs open through attrition.

the proposal. "There will be conflict. We will have to look at it," said Hosterman, adding later that whether the instrument is a right to do business ordinance or not, the "whole idea is a vibrant downtown."

By the numbers, Hosterman profiled a few categories from 2009. Crime was down 13 percent; 850 people were inoculated at a fairgrounds H1N1 clinic sponsored by Pleasanton and Dublin and the fire department. The switch to a new curbside recycling system for trash will increase recyclables by 22 percent. Eventually the city must meet a county voter mandated 75 percent reduction from the waste stream.

Hosterman said the city had some free events. They included

the organization said that it is mobilizing its 1 million members statewide to circulate the petition.

The organization's president, Jo Loss, said that members overwhelmingly supported a resolution at their 2008 convention to lower the vote threshold for a parcel tax. "This act alone cannot solve the problem of chronic underfunding of education throughout the state. However, it would

ENERGY

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begin at a date to be determined, and a parcel tax election likely in one year or a little more, it's important to carry on that education," said Grant.

A spokesperson for a group of science specialists said that they have designed a program for elementary school that carries them well into middle school and high school. Even at the earliest grades, the program involves the

member, and won a significant EPA award for it. The project is the largest in the world in power production for the process.

With the proper new technology extracting methane gas, as much as 50 percent more methane could be obtained, said Livermore assistant public works director Darren Greenwood. That means more power and less pollution, because methane is 20 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

Unlike DSRSD, Livermore already has to haul its sludge off site. However, the city doesn't have to haul it far. It uses the Vasco Road landfill, and some-

times during the year instead takes it to an approved site on a ranch in the Altamont.

Although Livermore is not facing a crisis concerning sludge disposal, the city is on board with trying to launch a pilot project for bio-solids to fuel, said Greenwood.

Greenwood added that the staff might ask the city council for a letter to Boxer and Feinstein, as DSRSD asked the Dublin council. Or the city manager might write a letter. Right now, the staff is studying it further. The city definitely "wants to be at the table. We've made some financial contribution," said Greenwood.

INNOVATION

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Others include, Admedes, which manufactures medical components, is in the process of constructing its facility in North Livermore. The work is anticipated to be completed in early summer with production to begin in June. The city anticipates that a medical cluster will develop around Admedes.

Other activities are underway

to encourage the creation of job

generating businesses for a five year period. They receive \$5000 per employee making equal to or above the current average Livermore salary. The program specifically targets the biomedical and high tech sectors.

The new program is a ten year program for any sales tax generating business that has at least \$3 million in annual tax-

scenes. Vice principals help oversee programs such as AVID, Title I, character education, student activities, the laptop program, and the Go Green Initiative. They also look after school safety, so students feel comfortable in the environment, and can learn better.

In high school, they also make sure that students are on track for graduation, and prepared to enter

might learn from the other as the projects go forward, said Requa.

The bio-solids coalition, which uses the acronym BABZE, is definitely in a learning situation. "We are investigating new technologies. We are in the early study stages. We will see what the processes are, and the impact on the environment," said Requa.

The Delta Diablo Sanitation District in Antioch serves as the administrative leader of the coalition. Delta Diablo general manager Gary Darling said that the goal is to have a pilot project "up and running in two years."

San Jose is also applying for a grant for its own study. Both entities are coordinating their respective projects. One group

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business owners, representatives of local Chambers of Commerce and leaders in the business community.

The bill has received support from several local Chambers of Commerce. San Ramon Chamber of Commerce CEO Carolyn Degnan, Livermore Chamber of Commerce President, CEO Dale Kaye and Manteca Chamber of

BABZE

