

MOORPARK MOSQUITO ABATEMENT DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

The Moorpark Mosquito Abatement District (District) was formed on October 25, 1960 by order of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors. Its statutory authority is in the California Health and Safety Code, Division 3., Chapter 5., Sections 2200 et seq. Its originating and continued purpose is for taking all the necessary or proper steps to control mosquitoes, flies or other vectors within its geographical service boundaries to prevent the transmittal of causative agents of human disease. It is governed by an appointed five member Board of Trustees.

The Moorpark Mosquito Abatement District (District) has been the center of controversy for compiling a \$1.4 million reserve fund from property taxes collected within its geographical boundaries.

On August 5, 1997, by a 3-2 vote, the District trustees voted to dissolve the District. The City of Moorpark's (City) efforts supporting the dissolution, newspaper accounts regarding the District, and the disposition of the District's large reserve fund and the dissolution process itself, fueled the Grand Jury's interest in this inquiry.

Although a final decision on the dissolution process needs to be determined, we decided to complete this inquiry to develop recommendations for use by the entities involved.

INQUIRY

We interviewed officials from the LAFCO, County Auditor-Controller's office, the City and the District. We also obtained and reviewed statutory and financial information on the District, attended a meeting of the trustees and read news articles on the District and on mosquito problems encountered in an adjacent county.

FINDINGS

The original boundaries of the District contained 21 square miles. In 1997, through annexation proceedings, the District's service area was expanded to 36 square miles.

The District's service area has been mostly rural, but over the years has changed due to residential development within the City.

Approximately 91% of the assessed valuation of the District's service area lies within the City. Geographically, however, the District's service area is evenly split.

The District has annually collected tax revenues in excess of its operating costs. No efforts have previously been made to reduce the tax revenues

derived from property tax assessments to a level deemed adequate to offset its operating costs.

Dissolution of the District will not eliminate or reduce the current tax allocations received by the District which have averaged approximately \$172,000 per year. These tax allocations will subsequently be shared (through negotiation) by the City and the County of Ventura due to the provisions of Proposition 13, which mandates the methodology for tax assessments and their allocation.

CONCLUSIONS

Sources of vector borne diseases, i.e., flies, mosquitoes and rodents are still evident in the unincorporated areas of the District's service area (egg ranches, horse ranches and stagnant water pools created by heavy rain conditions). This, coupled with recent mosquito problems discovered in an adjacent county tends to support the continuance of an adequate vector abatement program within the District.

Recognizing the eventual dissolution of the District and the gradual urbanization of the District's large service area, the City council and residents of the District should decide what form of abatement services will be required in the future. The mechanism for doing so should be resolved prior to dissolution.

The District deserves criticism for its long standing practice of collecting excess tax revenues in accumulating its large \$1.4 million reserve fund. On the other hand, the District has not acted improvidently in fulfillment of its mandated operational responsibilities. No evidence of wasteful spending practices could be found.

Since the District trustees did not unanimously vote for the dissolution, there is a question whether or not an election needs to be held to finalize the dissolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the District's Board of Trustees amend its prior 3-2 vote for dissolution to a unanimous one in order to eliminate the need for an election and avoid the expense connected therewith.
- That the City and County of Ventura contractually continue the District's vector abatement program at a level deemed adequate to protect its residents.
- That the District's \$1.4 million reserve fund be used specifically by the County and City to serve the public's best interest.
- That adequate reserve funds be established by the City and County to abate any emergency condition(s) that may arise.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

Board of Supervisors

City of Moorpark

Moorpark Mosquito Abatement District

Local Agency Formation Commission