

**CANDIDACY ANNOUNCEMENT
SAN DIEGO CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT # 8**

David has wide spread support from citizens of the local community and serves on many influential task forces and committees. Some of these committees which he volunteers his time for include: Congressional Border Task Force, Otay Mesa/Nestor Planning Committee, City of San Diego Oversight Committee Clean Water Act, and Mayor Golding's Voter Rights Task Force.

David's vision for the future of District Eight include the continued fight against crime, the building of our border infrastructure such as the Freeway 905 extension and the "Joh Train" from Mexico.

As the next City Councilman for District Eight, David is completely committed to serving the citizens of District Eight and will fight for the quality of life you deserve.

David has been in business for the past 22 years in the South Bay. He has been married for 17 years to his wife Jeannie. They have one daughter Krystle who attends Mar Vista Middle School.

Photographs for media publication available. For further information call (519) 423-8137

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The San Diego Union-Tribune.

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Vargas pays tribute to 'mom and dad' as he becomes newest city councilman

RAY HUARD

Staff Writer

23-Feb-1993 Tuesday

Juan Carlos Vargas was sworn in as a member of the San Diego City Council yesterday, the first Latino elected to the post without first being appointed.

The 31-year-old was surrounded by 21 members of his family, including his wife, Adrienne, and his parents.

"Mom and dad, you always taught me to strive for excellence, to reach for the stars," said Vargas, a Harvard-educated lawyer who once studied to be a Catholic priest. "But most importantly, you always said that with enough hard work and dedication, I could accomplish anything I set my mind to do. I'll never forget where I came from or the values of hard work and honesty that you taught me."

Vargas' swearing-in follows a busy week of last-minute campaigning, waiting through election day, savoring victory and then preparing to take office with only a brief transition. In the midst of it, he sparked something of a controversy with a group of his new constituents.

Vargas said he was just trying to be nice, but some of his South Bay constituents said they thought he sounded vindictive.

Vargas met Friday night with a South Bay group called Citizens Revolting Against Pollution to discuss city preparations for potential flooding from weekend rain.

Members of the group are miffed because Vargas told them he'd help them even though he knew they didn't vote for him, said the group's chairman, **David Gomez**.

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Vargas mentioned four times that he knew they hadn't voted for him, said Gomez, who had talked of running for the council himself but instead backed former council aide Francisco Estrada against Vargas.

"We're very unhappy with him," Gomez said. "We're not really going to invite him back until he apologizes."

"I definitely give him an apology," Vargas said. "I didn't mean anything bad about it at all. I knew their candidate didn't win. I didn't know I was doing anything to offend them."

The point he was making, Vargas said, was that he wanted to help the group's members regardless of how they had voted in the election.

"I hope I'm invited back," Vargas said. "They're a good group."

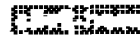
Vargas represents the 8th District, which runs from Golden Hill to San Ysidro. It was reshaped by the City Council in 1990 in response to a lawsuit that sought to increase the district's share of racial-minority and ethnic-minority voters. It is 61.5 percent Latino.

Vargas was elected from among 10 candidates seeking to replace Bob Filner, who was elected to Congress in November.

The old 8th District contained many of the same neighborhoods as the district Vargas represents. It was represented by Latinos Jess Haro in the mid-1970s and Uvaldo Martinez in the mid-1980s. Both were appointed to the post by the City Council to fill vacancies. Martinez was later elected to the post in a citywide vote. Haro did not run for election.

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The San Diego Union-Tribune.

(Page B-1)

After The Flood: Tijuana River Basin | Troubled land caught in tug of war | With many agencies in charge, little done, residents say

GREG MORAN

Staff Writer

CORRECTION | A story Sunday incorrectly identified the name of a local water district and the district's chief staff member. The correct title is the Tia Juana Valley County Water District, not Authority, and Art Letter is the district's general manager, not executive director. The San Diego Union-Tribune regrets the error. (930209, B-2)

07-Feb-1993 Sunday

From a distance, the Tijuana River Valley looks placid, calm -- a little piece of countryside in the city.

But looks can be deceiving. One month after the beginning of rains that again flooded the valley, the farmers, ranchers, businesses and residents who live here are still digging out.

The storm that swelled the Tijuana River, which usually meanders through the valley from south San Ysidro to the sea, crumpled sections of roads, serrated fields full of crops, washed away homes and disrupted hundreds of lives.

In a larger sense, the storm still lingers in the Tijuana River Valley, 5,000 acres of troubled terrain wedged between the border, the ocean and the southern fringe of urban San Diego.

The rains of January quickened a long-running debate here -- a debate that's about flood control, but also encompasses the emotional issue of property rights and, ultimately, who controls the valley.

But now, for the first time since 1972, when the San Diego City Council decided not to construct a 5-mile-long concrete flood control channel for the river, there is an opportunity to find the long-sought balance among the variety of interests in the valley.

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"What's happening is some of the factors that were there in the early 1970s are coming together again," said Art Letter, executive director of the Tia Juana Valley County Water Authority, a little-known agency that wants to fashion a flood-control plan for the valley.

"We have a window of opportunity to fix this thing."

The series of storms over two weeks in January killed five people and caused an estimated \$193 million in damage countywide. In the river valley, the flood washed out sections of Dairy Mart Road and Hollister Street, damaged more than 150 homes and washed out several million dollars worth of crops. Damage estimate in the valley was put at \$25 million.

Last week, President Clinton declared the county a disaster area, clearing the way for residents and businesses to apply for federal aid to repair their losses.

The city and county of San Diego -- two elements in the confusing patchwork of local, state and federal agencies that have an interest in the valley -- have agreed to work together on a flood-control solution.

Residents too are organizing. Under the guidance of Citizens Revolting Against Pollution, a group that has worked on solving a chronic problem with raw sewage spilling from Mexico, residents have been meeting since the flood ended, resolving to pressure politicians to find an answer.

That, likely, will not be an easy task.

"The biggest problem in the Tijuana River Valley is not what has been done, but what hasn't been done," said county Board of Supervisor Chairman Brian Bilbray, whose district includes the valley.

Bilbray has long advocated finding a balancing point and has been an outspoken critic of the various agencies that oversee land in the valley.

"The community is so disenfranchised politically, that the federal and state bureaucracies run roughshod over it," he said.

'Tapestry of interests'

To say that the Tijuana River Valley is a unique area is tantamount to saying it rained a little last month. There is hardly another area in the county that lies at the center of so many crosscurrents -- public and private.

"It's a very complicated tapestry of ownerships and interests," said Bob Copper, director of the county Parks and Recreation Department which, since

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1988, has purchased about 1,200 acres in the valley for a future park.

"And there's no one who's interested in the valley who doesn't hold whatever opinions they have very strongly."

The valley is home to horse ranches and horse breeders, to sod growers and crop farmers, and on its fringes, single-family homeowners living on winding, well-manicured streets.

The farmers and ranchers also give the valley its special rural character, kind of the last frontier in the nation's sixth-largest city.

But also sharing the valley is a dizzying array of public agencies, most concerned with protecting the Tijuana River National Estuarine Reserve -- 2,500 acres of sensitive and unique ecological habitat.

The state Department of Parks and Recreation, the state Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all play a major role in managing the reserve. The International Boundary and Waters Commission has jurisdiction over a portion of the river near the place it crosses the border, and has been trying for years to solve the sewage problem.

The county's landholdings for its regional park make it a major player in the valley. The city also is a large property owner and has land use say-so. Being on the border, the valley is a veritable highway for immigrants attempting to cross the border illegally, so the U.S. Border Patrol works there.

"There are so many agencies down here," lamented **David Gomez**, leader of Citizens Revolting Against Pollution, whose valley horse ranch was washed out in the flood. "And their concern is their own concern, not what is going to happen to the Tijuana River Valley as a whole."

Gomez spoke as he stood on the north levee of the river, just a few hundred yards from Mexico, pointing out something called the dissipater dike.

If you want to talk about flood control for the valley in the 1990s, this is about as good a place to start as anywhere.

A turnabout, and a warning

In 1967, the United States and Mexico signed a treaty that called for building a concrete channel in both countries for the Tijuana River. In the United States, plans called for a 5-mile-long channel through the valley capable of handling 135,000 cubic feet of water per second.

But in December 1971, the San Diego City Council changed its mind and withdrew its support for the project. Pressure from environmentalists who

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wished to protect the salt marsh at the west end of the valley, and the council's decision to preserve much of the valley as open space, led to the decision.

Surprised Mexican officials urged the city to reconsider, saying they were going ahead with their end of the agreement -- a \$55 million channelization project. They warned of dire consequences.

"If we channel our side of the river in Mexico and you do not in San Diego," Roberto de la Madrid, economic development director for the state of Baja said in 1972, "when it rains as it did in the years of 1916, 1937, 1938 and 1941, the volume and speed of the water will cause greater damage in the United States than ever before."

Original plans modified

The council, under the leadership of then-Mayor Pete Wilson, did not waver. So instead of a \$30 million concrete channel through the valley to the sea, the International Boundary and Waters Commission and Army Corps of Engineers came up with a scaled-down, modified plan -- the dissipater dike, said Rene Valenzuela, commission spokesman. The dike essentially disperses flood waters crossing from Mexico, diluting the force and speed.

But what happens to the water as it moves west, into the valley, is another problem, Gomez said as he stood on the levee. For him and others, the lost opportunity of 20 years ago still rankles. There have been notable floods in 1979-80, 1983, 1985 and again in 1991. After last month's disaster, Gomez said, further channel work is necessary.

"It would be good to have a concrete channel, but it would cost three or four times as much as it did in 1972," he said. "All we're asking for is the channel to be widened and deepened."

"We know there will be flooding, but at least it can be more controlled flooding."

Though it sounds simple, achieving such a goal is complicated. To begin with, the valley is the end point for a watershed of more than 1,700 square miles -- most of that lying in Mexico.

So what happens across the border has a direct impact on what happens in the valley. Just about everyone agrees that any solution will have to involve working closely with Mexican authorities.

It also will mean getting together and trying to reconcile the myriad interests and responsibilities in the valley itself. There are those who find it easiest to lay most of the blame for the chronic flooding at the

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feet of the estuary and those who are responsible for preserving this unique habitat.

The estuary is home to several endangered species, such as the least tern and the light footed clapper rail. The complex ecosystem of the estuary is important, rare and fragile, said Paul Jorgensen, an ecologist who works in the reserve.

"Many of us have a stake in the river valley, as we each have our different focus," he said from an office in the reserve's visitors center that looks out on the estuary. "We're just trying to focus on protecting this place."

But for some, that protection comes at the expense of others. In the office of the Tia Juana Valley County Water Authority, executive director Letter displays a series of aerial photographs taken during the recent flooding of the river, and offers one version of the flood.

Downstream from the dissipater dike, the pictures show the water forking dramatically. One fork goes south. The other bends north, then west toward Hollister Street, then north again. It essentially cut a new path.

Letter and others say that a forest of willow trees in the river channel had not been sufficiently cleared to allow the water to move through. If the channel had been better cleared, there would have been flooding but "a lot more water would have stayed in the riverbed," Letter concluded.

Bilbray said that last summer most of the channel was cleared of overgrown vegetation, but the effort was stymied at the west end where the channel enters the estuary. State officials' concerns over damaging wildlife habitat stalled the work, he said.

Walter Kimzey, a longtime resident on Monument Road near the notorious Smugglers Gulch, didn't have the benefit of the aerial photos, but came to the same conclusion.

"The river is so plugged up that it spread the water all over the valley," he said.

Domino effect

Everyone talks about finding a balance between the environmental interests and residents' interests. Jorgensen and Tom Alexander, refuge manager for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, discuss a comprehensive study of the whole valley -- biologically, hydrologically, ecologically.

What must also be considered is the increasing urbanization of Tijuana, which has contributed to hillside erosion and more urban runoff, they said.

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"When you do one thing, it affects another, and another and another," Alexander explained.

And therefore the intricate problems go on and on and on. This just doesn't sit well with some. Talk to Humberto Dessada, who breeds horses at the Rosa Mara ranch on Hollister Street, damaged by the flood.

"We feel something has to be done soon," he said, "something about the river, about the channel." He paused.

"It's bad. I don't know. They've been talking about doing something for years."

Indeed, taking the lead on addressing flood containment and control hasn't happened in part because of the Balkanization of the valley.

"There hasn't been anyone who has stepped forward to take that responsibility," said Ed Navarro, San Diego Coast District superintendent for the state Department of Parks and Recreation.

Navarro thinks the International Boundary and Waters Commission could take the lead, but the commission's Valenzuela said that the agency only would be willing to sit down with the city, the county or whomever -- if invited. Remember, nearly 30 years ago the commission did come up with a plan, but that was rejected by the city.

Residents are impatient. At a packed and emotional meeting at Southwest High School last month, hundreds vented their anger at the inaction by politicians who have ignored the valley.

"You can bet your bottom dollar that if it was their homes floating away, they would have done something about it," one man said to wild applause.

Meanwhile, Letter and the members of the water authority believe they may have the answer. This month, they hope to embark on an ambitious study of ground water and surface water management.

"From that, we hope we can come up with a flood containment and control plan," said Letter, who believes it could satisfy both public and private interests.

In the wake of the floods, San Diego Mayor Susan Golding created a joint working group with city and county staff to look at recommendations for the river valley. Some people, like Letter, are optimistic that the valley may be getting sorely needed attention.

Golding, talking about the working group, seemed to agree when she said, "It's being put together because of the floods, but also because that part

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of the city has been neglected in the past."

Residents continue to dig out from the ravaging flood, knowing full well that the rainy season hasn't ended, and at some point, the water will come again.

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Officials heap scorn on plan to clean up border sewage

KATHRYN BALINT

Staff Writer

10-Apr-1994 Sunday

While raw Mexican sewage continues to flow daily across the international border into San Diego, city and civic groups say a sewage-treatment project to clean up the mess by October 1995 is mismanaged and ill-planned.

One San Diego city waste-water official even doubts the agency building the plant can meet the promised completion date.

"It's just so frustrating," said David Schlesinger, director of the city Metropolitan Wastewater Department and an outspoken critic of the International Boundary and Water Commission's U.S. sector (IBWC), which is in charge of building the sewage-treatment plant.

Schlesinger said there appears to be no budget for operating and maintaining the plant once it is built. And, he said, there is no decision on how to dispose of the treated sewage for the first three years of operation.

A congressional subcommittee will hold a hearing Wednesday about delays and other problems that have dogged the project.

The IBWC, a joint U.S.-Mexican agency that addresses water and boundary issues along the nearly 2,000-mile-long border shared by the two countries, says the 75-million-gallon-a-day sewage-treatment plant is on a "fast track."

Grading of the treatment-plant site, at the corner of Monument and Dairy Mart roads in the Tijuana River Valley, is scheduled to begin in June, said IBWC spokesman Rene Valenzuela.

But an increasing number of leaders, including some from the city of San Diego and the local chapter of the Sierra Club, criticize the commission's handling of the project, the biggest public works effort in IBWC history.

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Among their criticisms:

- The cost of the facility is likely to exceed the U.S. spending limit of \$239 million, city and Sierra Club officials say. But the IBWC refuses to divulge its cost estimates.
- There is no formal plan to dispose of the treated sewage for the first three years of the plant's operation, the city and the Sierra Club say. Completion of an undersea tunnel to dispose of the effluent is not scheduled until 1998.
- There appears to be no budget, or any money appropriated, to operate, maintain and staff the plant, says the city. Operation costs are estimated at \$9 million to \$10 million annually.
- There is no apparent plan to deal with toxic chemicals, heavy metals and other industrial wastes that are in Mexico's sewage, the city and the Sierra Club say.

Narendra N. Gunaji, commissioner for the IBWC's U.S. sector, did not agree to an interview, but through his office he did issue an 11-page written statement addressing some of the concerns.

Agency tight-lipped on cost

Rep. Bob Filner, D-San Diego, said he requested Wednesday's hearing by the Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee of the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation to look into the IBWC's handling of the project.

"I'm not confident of their management skills and oversight skills," Filner said of the IBWC. He sits on the subcommittee.

The city of San Diego was so concerned about the IBWC's ability to complete the project that the city asked to take over. The federal government rejected the request.

Many agencies and groups asking the IBWC for information about the project complain that the agency provides few or no answers.

One of the major unanswered questions, for instance, is the project's cost.

Both Schlesinger and Sierra Club attorney Robert Simmons, who say they have been refused detailed cost estimates, suspect the project will far exceed the \$239 million cap set by Congress.

The IBWC's Valenzuela claims federal law prohibits public disclosure of

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the estimated costs.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency devised its own cost estimates, arriving at an estimate of \$378.8 million, said Doug Eberhardt, the agency's U.S.-Mexico border coordinator.

Eberhardt said the question of whether the project will exceed the spending cap depends on how much the city of San Diego and Mexico contribute.

The IBWC said it is negotiating with Mexico on its share.

Schlesinger also raises concerns about maintenance and operation of the plant.

"There's no budget and no plan for training and recruiting operators," he said, adding that employees must be lined up well in advance. The city, for example, has begun training employees in anticipation of opening a water-reclamation plant in 1997 in University City.

The IBWC said it plans to advertise for a contractor to operate the plant and that start-up funds will come from shuffling money within agency coffers.

Once the plant is running, Schlesinger said, that leaves the question of what to do with the treated sewage until the ocean outfall is completed in 1998.

The IBWC said it is considering these options, in order of priority, but no decision has been made: returning it to Mexico, sending it to the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant for re-treatment and disposal, or sprinkling a limited amount of the waste water on land.

Although the EPA has sued San Diego to force the city to upgrade its treatment of sewage discharge 4.5 miles offshore into the deep ocean, the EPA may allow sewage in the Tijuana River Valley to be applied to the land, Eberhardt said.

"We just have to face reality, and if the reality is raw sewage, then we'd rather have advanced primary effluent," Eberhardt said.

And Schlesinger said the city refuses to re-treat sewage treated at the international plant. "Why build a treatment plant then pump to Point Loma to be treated again. That's not acceptable."

Meanwhile, the Sierra Club said the environmental-impact study of the project is so inadequate that the club is considering filing a lawsuit.

Chief's job in jeopardy

Among the Sierra Club's dozen or so concerns: There is no evaluation of industrial toxic chemicals in Mexican sewage; no evaluation of the effects of advanced-primary-treated sewage might have on marine life; and no consideration of a less expensive water-reclamation alternative.

"It's the worst environmental document I've seen in 15 years' involvement in environmental documents," said Simmons, a University of San Diego law professor.

In addition to the criticisms, the project has been beset by delays since the IBWC began it in 1990.

Gunaji, the IBWC commissioner, in part blames the delays on the city of San Diego.

But **David** Gomez, president of Citizens Revolting Against Pollution, a group that claims 1,000 members and has fought for years to rid the Tijuana River Valley of Mexican sewage, faults Gunaji.

"He did have a good direction at first, but he didn't know how to manage his direction," said Gomez, a San Ysidro resident. "Then he started to act like a politician. He made promises and kept breaking his promises, and that's what made people mad."

Gomez, calling for new management for the IBWC, said he hopes the congressional hearing will "get Gunaji out of the picture." Elected officials have said privately that Gunaji's job is on the line.

In his written statement, Gunaji said he has received no indication that the hearing has been orchestrated to remove him from office. He added: "As a political appointee, I serve at the pleasure of the president, and I can be removed by the president at any time."

The White House reportedly is considering several candidates to replace Gunaji, who was appointed by President Reagan in 1987. One of the candidates is Pete Silva, a city of San Diego water utilities deputy director and former IBWC engineer. Silva said he interviewed for the post in January.

Even his harshest critics, however, credit Gunaji with focusing the federal spotlight on San Diego's border waste water woes.

Under Gunaji, the IBWC promised to build the international sewage-treatment plant operating by 1995.

But when the agency last year pushed back the completion date to December

1998, it prompted the cities of San Diego and Imperial Beach and the state of California to declare a state of emergency.

Schlesinger attributed the "frustratingly slow" progress to "bureaucratic bungling, territorial turf battles and outright hostility and uncooperativeness of senior agency officials."

The IBWC agreed to speed construction of the treatment plant by building a facility that treats sewage to a lesser degree than originally planned.

That first phase, an advanced primary treatment plant, is scheduled to be completed in October 1995. The proposal called for an upgrade to secondary treatment by the end of 1996.

"I've seen more progress in the last six months than in the four years since I've been here," Schlesinger said.

For instance, in the past few weeks, the El Paso, Texas-based IBWC assigned an engineer with decision-making authority to San Diego. The agency also has agreed to upgrade an aging Tijuana sewage pump station in an effort to cut down the sewage overflows into San Diego.

However, Schlesinger said he still doubts the IBWC's ability to complete the treatment plant by October 1995. "But say they get it on line in early 1996," he said. "That's a lot better than '98 or '99."



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The San Diego Union-Tribune.

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Suit against Tijuana River Valley sewage treatment plant is settled

KATHRYN BALINT

Staff Writer

04-Aug-1995 Friday

The Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation have settled their lawsuit challenging the federal government's plans to build a sewage-treatment plant intended to clean up six decades of raw Mexican sewage flows into San Diego.

In their lawsuit filed in federal court last year, the two environmental advocacy groups contended the sewage plant the U.S. government proposed for the Tijuana River Valley would not adequately protect the environment. The lawsuit suggested that a series of ponds, instead of a conventional plant, would save money while treating the sewage more thoroughly.

The settlement signed this week by U.S. District Judge Napoleon Jones calls for further studies on the potential environmental impact of the project. But, to the dismay of advocates of the federal sewage plans, the settlement leaves open the possibility that sewage-treatment ponds could be built.

The Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation say the settlement is a victory for the environment. They said they got everything they had asked for more than a year ago, before the lawsuit had been filed.

"I think that we're satisfied that the federal government is going to do what they should have done 12 months ago," said Gary Sirota, attorney for the Surfrider Foundation.

"I consider this to be a victory," he said. "However, I'm very frustrated that it took the federal government 12 months of fighting with us to agree to a reasonable solution."

Lori Saldana, a Sierra Club member who is named as an individual plaintiff in the suit, said: "This is exactly what we asked for a year ago. The

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unfortunate thing is it took over a year for the government to agree that yes, an additional level of study is necessary."

The settlement, in part, requires studies of:

- Options for discharging treated sewage for the year after the treatment plant begins operating but before the ocean-disposal tunnel is completed.
- The effects of discharging offshore sewage that did not meet federal treatment standards.
- Mexico's progress in implementing a sludge-disposal plan and a pretreatment program to prevent industrial toxic wastes from being disposed of in the sewers.
- The feasibility of using a series of ponds for secondary treatment of the sewage.

San Diego City Councilman Juan Vargas, whose district includes the Tijuana River Valley, condemned the settlement, saying the federal government sold out by leaving open the possibility for sewage-treatment ponds.

"We thought the idea of ponding was closed, and now they've reopened it," he said. "It had been laid to rest. It had no merit."

While relieved the lawsuit has been settled, **David Gomez**, a Nestor resident and president of Citizens Revolting Against Pollution, said he doesn't want to see the ponds become a reality.

"We're elated this lawsuit has been settled and hope it's buried," Gomez said. "We hope the studies they do will prove that those ponds won't work down here."

His grass-roots group, which was formed to pressure politicians into solving the chronic problem of Mexican sewage in the Tijuana River Valley, also had worried that the legal action would stop progress on the plant, which is now under construction.

Of the settlement, he said: "It seems like they (Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation) didn't get much, but that's good."

Expressing pleasure with the settlement, Laura Bose, chief of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's San Diego-Tijuana section, said the agency had been planning to conduct many of the studies anyway.

The EPA and the International Boundary and Water Commission, which are building the plant, were defendants in the suit.

"What I think happened is this lawsuit has added some little pieces we

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might not have studied without it," Bose said in a telephone interview from her office in San Francisco.

Fees for the Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation attorneys were not part of the settlement but may be part of a separate settlement, all parties said.

In a separate pending legal challenge to the border sewage-treatment project, the Surfrider Foundation has sued San Diego, saying wastewater contamination will persist even after the city builds an ocean outfall to dispose of the treated sewage. Vargas said he fears construction of the outfall could be delayed while federal officials study the pond sewage-treatment process, which would not require an ocean outfall.

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The voter rights task force

UNION-TRIBUNE

13-Oct-1997 Monday

San Diego Mayor Susan Golding selected 15 people for a task force last week to recommend to the City Council whether voter approval should be required for new city buildings.

■ Mary Ball, Chairwoman

Age: 31

Title: Cox Communications director of government relations.

Other committees: Board member of San Diego County Taxpayers Association; board member of East County Economic Development Commission; member of the president's council of Poway Chamber of Commerce; member of media committee for Super Bowl Host Committee.

Business ties to city: Cox Communications operates cable television system under a franchise agreement with the city.

Reason for selection: A Republican, Ball has been politically active and contributed to several election campaigns, including those of Mayor Susan Golding, and City Council members Byron Wear and George Stevens. She is a former chief of staff to San Diego County Supervisor Dianne Jacob.

■ Rev. Robert Ard

Age: 59

Title: Founder and pastor of Christ Church of San Diego in Golden Hill.

Other committees: President of San Diego Interdenominational Council; member of United African-American Ministries Council; former chairman of San Diego County Human Relations Commission; former chairman of San Diego County Cable Television Review Committee, former member of the county

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■ **David Ferguson**

Declined to serve on the task force.

Title: Partner of Goldman Ferguson Partners Corporate Realty Advisers.

Reason for selection: Ferguson was chosen to represent the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce. He said he has too many other commitments and cannot serve on the task force. He will be replaced by someone else representing the chamber.

■ **Richard Friedland**

Age: 72

Title: President of the Heritage Group, a Los Angeles real estate investment/management firm.

Other committees: Member of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce; member of Lincoln Club, a group that raises money for Republican candidates; member of the La Jolla Shores District Advisory Board; member of the San Diego chapter of Jewish Republicans.

Business ties to city: None.

Reason for selection: A Republican, Friedland has been an activist in La Jolla since moving to San Diego from Los Angeles about eight years ago. He has made contributions to many candidates, including Mayor Susan Golding and most San Diego City Council members.

■ **David Gomez**

Age: 57

Title: Rancher who raises Arabian horses.

Other committees: President of Citizens Revolting Against Pollution; member of the San Diego Housing Appeals Board; member of Otay Mesa-Nestor Planning Group.

Business ties to city: None.

Reason for selection: A Democrat, Gomez is a long-time South Bay activist who has led a campaign to clean up the Tijuana River Valley and stop Mexican sewage from flowing into the United States. He has worked on many election campaigns, including those of Mayor Susan Golding, U.S. Reps. Bob Filner, D-San Diego and Brian Bilbray, R-Imperial Beach and state Sen.

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County and city buying prized land | Government units own two-thirds of river valley

Kathryn Balint
STAFF WRITER

14-Oct-1997 Tuesday

TIJUANA RIVER VALLEY -- Parcel by parcel, the land in this valley just north of the Mexican border is being bought up by the county and city of San Diego.

"It's a land rush down there," said Carolyn Powers, a member of the Tijuana Valley County Water District board.

The Tijuana River Valley is probably best known for undocumented immigrants and raw sewage, both coming from south of the border.

But county Parks and Recreation Department officials say the valley is also one of the few remaining wetlands left in the United States and is worth preserving as a regional park. The county has been quietly purchasing land the last few years, becoming the valley's largest landowner.

At the same time, the city of San Diego is snatching up land for regional sewage projects, for environmental mitigation and for flood control.

"There's really very little remaining private property in the river valley," said Susan Hector, chief of special operations for the county department.

Public agencies own about two-thirds of the land in the valley, which is within San Diego city limits and stretches along the border almost to Interstate 5.

Here, the Tijuana River, infamous for conveying raw Mexican sewage, crosses into the United States and flows out to sea.

And, here, the U.S. Border Patrol makes more than 1,000 apprehensions a

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month of people illegally entering the United States.

"It's really the old Wild West," said Anne Rast, assistant director of county parks and recreation.

The pastoral valley is crisscrossed by equestrian trails and dotted with farms and is the site of a national estuary. A new sewage treatment plant here cleans up the raw sewage flows. Endangered species, such as the least Bell's vireo and the least tern, dwell in the willows and other riparian habitat that cover the area.

Eight years ago, elected officials unveiled plans for a 1,100-acre regional park here.

"This is a gem that's not well known," Rast said.

But the prized territory hasn't been protected.

"The Tijuana River Valley has been treated as a dumping ground," Rast said.

Rep. Bob Filner, D-San Diego, held a news conference yesterday, calling on the city to step up its code enforcement efforts to get rid of illegal berms and dumps that he said could exacerbate flooding in the valley this winter.

Volunteers planned this morning to remove weeds and debris from the valley to keep the floodwaters at bay.

And Assemblywoman Denise Ducheny, D-San Diego, recently called attention to a 186-acre worm farm, where she said wood, plastic, concrete and other building materials have been improperly dumped.

"If a flood occurred, this stuff could be washed out through the estuary, harming the environment that we are trying so hard to restore," Ducheny said.

Derrick Roach, office manager for Disney Enterprises, which runs the vermiculture operation, denied the allegations and said they are the latest example of political wrangling in the valley.

"The city wants to advance their agenda, and the county has theirs in mind," he said.

The county bought most of its 850 acres here using \$10 million from a 1988 state bond issue. It is seeking state or federal funds to pay for 247 additional acres.

The county leases some of its land to farmers, such as Disney. Projects are

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under way on other county-owned land, including:

- A \$43,000 visitor station. The station uses a donated house that had been spared the wrecking ball and moved onto county land.
- A \$50,000 Little League ball field, which is being built on 20 acres. The new field will replace one that was washed out by a flood in 1993.

David Gomez, who leases land from the county to raise Arabian horses, said he was impressed with the regional park plan but is disappointed with the results.

"The taxpayers were more or less led to believe that with this park bond money we were going to get a regional park," Gomez said. "But we haven't seen anything built. All you see is land being preserved."

While the county dreams of a park, the city of San Diego focuses on something less glamorous: sewage treatment. The city spent \$800,000 for 67 acres in the valley. Nearly half a billion dollars worth of sewage facilities will be built.

"We'll be building down there for 30 or 40 years," said **David Schlesinger**, director of the city Metropolitan Wastewater Department.

Construction of a 7-million-gallon-a-day water-reclamation plant is to begin later this year.

The city is spending even more money to replace riparian habitat destroyed during construction, and wildlife isn't the only one to reap the rewards.

The county earned \$167,000 by allowing the city to plant habitat on 14 acres of county-owned land, the city said.

Besides its sewage treatment plans, the city also is eyeing land in the valley for flood protection.

After floods wiped out farms four years ago, the San Diego City Council decided to buy 10 parcels in the most flood-prone areas, city engineer **Frank Belock** said.

The city plans to spend \$300,000 and is seeking a \$1.2 million state grant to buy the land by the end of the year, **Belock** said.

The sooner, the better, residents say.

"The major thrust to buy this land up is to get people out of harm's way," said rancher **Don Opel**, who moved to higher ground after losing his horse stable in the 1993 flood. "Winter is coming, and people are really becoming

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frightened because of all this El Nino talk."

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Treatment plant fails toxin tests | Officials puzzled by woes at border-area facility

Kathryn Balint
STAFF WRITER

02-Mar-1998 Monday

The waste water produced by a new \$100 million sewage treatment plant near the U.S.-Mexico border has failed water-quality tests repeatedly, leaving the U.S. government scrambling to figure out why.

"We just don't know what the problem is," said Bill Ruth, a principal engineer for the International Boundary and Water Commission, a U.S.-Mexican agency that built the treatment plant.

The U.S. government paid for nearly all the facility, which was designed to clean up millions of gallons of raw sewage that have flowed daily from Mexico into San Diego.

Construction crews completed it 10 months ago, and in September laboratory technicians began testing to see how well the plant cleansed the Mexican sewage. The effluent passed most of the tests, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

But for five straight months, the effluent failed 11 successive tests for "acute toxicity" -- an especially important test that determines whether the treated water is so toxic that it would kill marine life.

Too many fathead minnows, which are used as test animals, died when immersed in the effluent from the plant for 96-hour periods.

The good news, said Jane Diamond, the EPA's Southern California chief, is that marine life was not endangered.

Because a 3.5-mile-long undersea disposal tunnel is not yet finished, the effluent from the plant has been piped to San Diego's Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant, which treated it again before disposing of it into the

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ocean.

The border plant is scheduled to permanently begin treating Mexican sewage and discharging it into the ocean in September when the tunnel is completed.

The bad news is that operation of the plant is still uncertain. Under its state permit, the plant must meet a long list of ocean-protection standards -- including passing the toxicity tests.

That is upsetting to people who were counting on the plant to permanently stem the tide of Mexican sewage into the Tijuana River Valley. The sewage has flowed for more than six decades past farms and wildlife habitat and then onto San Diego County's southernmost beaches.

"We're spending \$200 million for that plant and its ocean outfall, so we'd better have one that passes the toxicity test," said Nestor resident David Gomez, who intends to run for election against San Diego City Councilman Juan Vargas this year.

"We're delighted we have a plant, but we want to make sure it runs," said Gomez, founder of Citizens Revolting Against Pollution, which lobbied for years to get the plant built.

Officials from the Boundary and Water Commission, the EPA and the city of San Diego's Metropolitan Wastewater Department are baffled by the plant's failure on the tests. They say there was no hint before or during construction that it would happen.

"None of the testing that was done for the characterization of sewage back in the design phase picked up any problem like this," said the boundary commission's Ruth.

But the Sierra Club's Lori Saldana and the Surfrider Foundation's Gary Sirota say they are not surprised. Mexico's sewage contains pesticides and other chemicals banned long ago in the United States, they said.

Their organizations unsuccessfully sued the federal government four years ago to stop construction of the plant. The lawsuit contended that a less conventional sewage treatment system using ponds instead of mechanical equipment would better handle those toxins.

"The fact that it failed the tests . . . is no surprise," Sirota said last week. "We have been screaming for years that would happen."

The waste water treatment plant, just north of the international border near Dairy Mart and Monument roads, treated 13 million gallons of sewage a day from September to Jan. 8, when it was shut down. Ruth said operating

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the plant did not make sense while officials searched for a solution to the failures.

The facility restarted this week. It will run for two months so plant operators and technicians can examine the plumbing, machinery and sewage to determine what is making the effluent so toxic.

Workers at San Diego's Metropolitan Wastewater Department are among the sleuths. They were hired to test the effluent in the city's laboratory.

Alan Langworthy, the department's deputy director in charge of the lab, said the culprit could be one contaminant or a mixture of them; there is no primary suspect.

"There isn't one toxic substance, such as DDT or lead or something like that, that just sticks out and you could point to and say, 'Well, no wonder the plant isn't passing the acute toxicity test,' " he said.

Lab technicians plan to remove contaminants, one by one, and test the waste water each time with the minnows to try to pinpoint the problem.

"The very first thing we're going to look at is for the potential of ammonia to be the culprit here," Langworthy said. Ammonia, common in human waste, has caused similar problems at other treatment plants, he said.

Ruth estimated the tests will cost the federal government \$50,000 to \$100,000, depending on how quickly the problem is found.

As investigators try to get the treatment facility working properly, the U.S. government is going ahead with a plan to upgrade the plant.

The options include construction of a conventional secondary treatment plant or installation of the kind of treatment ponds advocated by the Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation.

The Sierra Club's Saldana said the pond technology is superior and would cost less than conventional treatment. "It will provide safe treatment for protecting marine ecology and public health," she said.

But others, including some residents of the area around the plant, object to the ponds. Vargas, the councilman who represents the district, wants proven, conventional treatment technology. He calls the ponds experimental and unsafe.

"In the end," he said, "you'll have more problems than solutions."

The public is invited to a hearing from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. today at Southwest High School, 1685 Hollister St., at which the two alternatives

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will be discussed.

Border cleanup

The 10-month-old international Wastewater Treatment Plant was built by the U.S. government to treat raw Mexican sewage that overflowed into San Diego. The cost of the \$100 million plant was primarily paid for by the U.S. government. Mexico agreed to pay \$16 million and to dispose of sludge generated at the plant.

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Sewage-to-faucet water plan is delayed | Panel asks more study on purification system

Kathryn Balint
STAFF WRITER

05-Mar-1998 Thursday

San Diego's plan to turn waste water into drinking water has been delayed six to nine months because a City Council committee yesterday asked for more studies to be done.

The council's Natural Resources and Culture Committee voted unanimously for further study of the controversial \$168 million plan to purify sewage water then mix it with raw drinking water in a city reservoir.

Councilwoman Valerie Stallings called the program "ahead of its time" and said the additional studies would help allay any fears the public may have about the project.

"I would like to be able to gather more information," she said.

The city's Metropolitan Wastewater Department was all set this month to release a draft environmental impact report that included two years of scientific studies of sewage purification technology and of the potential long-term health effects of the project.

"The document is essentially ready, and we could print it and release it within two weeks," said department director **David Schlesinger**.

But the committee's request for more studies will delay the report's release to the public by six to nine months, he said. Waste-water officials initially had hoped that the purified sewage water could begin flowing from San Diegans' faucets as early as 2001; Schlesinger said the delay in the environmental report will affect the entire project.

Councilman Byron Wear said that could buy some valuable time to educate the public about the project. "I think we have some work to do with the public

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in terms of getting their support," he said.

The council committee requested that the environmental impact report on the project include:

- An evaluation of whether the purified sewage water could be used by high-tech and biotech industries in San Diego.
- An independent financial analysis on the cost and affordability of the project.
- Data on how well the purification process works on sewage that flows through the North City Water Reclamation Plant in University City.
- Findings of a soon-to-be-released report by the National Research Council on the safety of drinking highly treated sewage water.

The city's so-called toilet-to-tap project has gained the support of many local organizations, from the Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation to the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. and the San Diego County Medical Society.

But opposition to the project also is mounting, both because of health concerns and because of its cost.

David Gomez, who is running against Councilman Juan Vargas for the 8th District City Council seat, told the council committee yesterday that he thinks the project could pose health risks. Gomez said he believes it is technologically feasible to clean up sewage so that it is drinkable, but he warned that accidents can and do happen.

He also said that the city's plan to do a long-term study to see if San Diegans drinking the purified waste water give birth to more babies with spina bifida or suffer from any unusual diseases should be a "flag" that the project could be unsafe.

Schlesinger, of the waste-water department, called the project "conservative" and said it has a number of safeguards that would prevent sewage-borne bacteria from accidentally getting into the city's drinking water. The project also has the conceptual approval of the state's Department of Health Services, he said.

Former Councilman Bruce Henderson, who may seek Stallings' 6th District council seat, called the committee's decision to postpone the release of the environmental impact report "politics as usual" at City Hall.

Henderson opposes the project, saying that it could introduce something harmful into San Diego's drinking water. He said the decision to keep the

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public from seeing the environmental report was a political move to keep the project from becoming an issue during upcoming council races.

"What disturbs me the most is that Mr. Schlesinger made it very clear that there was no reason not to go forward with the environmental impact report document right now -- they're all ready to print," Henderson said.

"It's no surprise that with three incumbent City Council members with strong opposition headed for a June election that this was postponed. It's absolutely outrageous. This is an issue that should be before the voters."

Seven speakers told the committee yesterday that they support the city's sewage purification plans. Most said that San Diego, which imports 90 percent of its water from the Colorado River and Northern California, cannot afford to use water just once then dump it into the ocean.

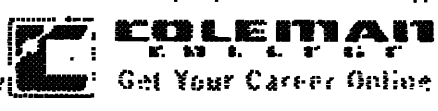
Among them was Rochelle Bold, vice president of government affairs for the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. She said the project would make San Diego County less reliant on outside sources of water.

"This is an opportunity to have local control," Bold said.

As proposed, the project would take 15 million gallons a day of reclaimed water produced at the University City reclamation plant and treat it even further, to a point that city waste-water officials say would make it even purer than the city's existing tap water.

The purified sewage water would then be piped 23 miles to the San Vicente reservoir, where it would be mixed with raw drinking water and stored for a year. Finally, the mix would undergo conventional water treatment before being piped to San Diego water customers.

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Strong views differ on border sewage plant | Facility upgrade is at issue

Kathryn Balint
STAFF WRITER

03-Mar-1998 Tuesday

NESTOR -- About the only thing people who attended a meeting on border sewage last night agreed on was that the United States' new \$100 million waste-water treatment plant must be upgraded.

But they differed on how to upgrade the facility in the Tijuana River Valley, which is called the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Environmental activists pushed for an unconventional method of treating sewage using a series of ponds.

People living near the sewage-plagued river valley were equally fervent in their opposition to ponds. They said they want the plant upgraded using conventional, mechanical sewage-treatment technology.

The U.S. government built the facility 10 months ago as the first step toward permanently stemming the flow of millions of gallons of raw Mexican sewage into San Diego. U.S. officials have long said they intend to build an addition to the plant to further treat the Mexican sewage.

Last night's meeting, attended by about 50 people at Southwest High School, was held by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to hear citizens' opinions on the future of the plant. The options for upgrading the plant were detailed in a draft environmental impact report issued in January.

"The question to upgrade the treatment plant has already been made," said Gary Sirota, immediate past president of the national board of the Surfrider Foundation. "The question is, 'What flavor is it?'"

He supports a \$21 million option using sewage-treatment ponds.

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"I can empathize with those people saying, 'No open sewage ponds in my back yard,'" Sirota said. "I wouldn't want an open sewer in my back yard. But these are not open sewers. These are incredibly effective waste-water treatment systems."

Gil Inzunza, who lives near the Tijuana River Valley and who sits on the board of the Tia Juana Valley County Water District, vehemently opposed the ponding technology. He said odors are a particular concern.

"This is what scares citizens," he said. "These ponds should not be in our valley."

Art Letter, general manager of the water district, pleaded with EPA officials not to install ponds.

"Please do not make a long-term sewage treatment decision . . . which will cause local people to suffer the disastrous consequences of well-meaning intentions," he said. "The folks around here have suffered enough from inappropriate federal decisions."

Imperial Beach resident Carolyn Powers, who sits on the water district's board, called the ponds experimental. And Nestor resident **David** Gomez, who formed the grass-roots group Citizens Revolting Against Pollution, told EPA officials, "We don't want to have sewage back in our community."

Proponents of sewage-treatment ponds pointed out that the international plant, as it is, has failed 11 consecutive tests for "acute toxicity." That test determines whether the effluent produced at the plant is so toxic that it could kill marine life.

Chris Spengler, a past president of the local chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, said there's no reason to think that conventional sewage treatment will work on the secondary phase of the plant because the existing conventional primary plant doesn't work.

"Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent for a traditional primary treatment plant and . . . they have no idea why it's failing 11 successive tests of acute toxicity," Spengler said.

EPA project engineer Sheldon Gen said the EPA would have to ask Congress for more money to upgrade or expand the plant; Congress had set a \$239 million cap for the plant and the sewage disposal tunnel. Only several million dollars remains.

Anyone wanting to comment on the draft environmental impact report may do so before March 23 by writing to Elizabeth Borowiec, EPA environmental protection specialist, 75 Hawthorne St., San Francisco, CA 94105.

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(Page B-3.)

ELECTION '98 | CALIFORNIA PRIMARY VOTERS GUIDE

San Diego City Council | DISTRICT 2 | DISTRICT 4 | DISTRICT 6 | DISTRICT 8

26-May-1998 Tuesday

San Diego City Council The San Diego Union-Tribune asked candidates for the San Diego City Council to supply a statement of candidacy and briefly reply to these questions:

What actions would you take to improve the quality of services in your district?

Do you support the proposal to build a new ballpark for the Padres downtown, and do you think the plan should be subject to voter approval if any city money is involved?

Should the city build a new main library downtown, and do you think it is necessary for the council to put the question on the ballot?

Do you support plans to expand the Convention Center using transient occupancy taxes to help pay for it?

Should the city make more improvements to Qualcomm Stadium to improve the city's chances of getting another Super Bowl?

What qualifications, attributes or perspectives would you bring to this elected position that your opponent or opponents would not?

San Diego City Council

DISTRICT 2

David W. Diehl

21.04.403.1709

Newspaper publisher (The Obesian)

Statement: Stop corporate welfare. My 'Show Me Ordinance' prohibits gifts of taxpayer dollars to businesses unless it's proven to benefit all citizens of San Diego.

District: Develop hands-on review with nonsupervisory city employees to get their suggestions. Recruit civic groups and volunteers to work for our common good.

Ballpark: Yes. Only if an economic benefit to all the citizens of San Diego is proven by an independent cost-benefit study, followed by a public hearing; and if a binding contract is made whereby all public moneys would be returned if the Padres did not live up to their contract.

Library: I would support it. I would like the voters to have a choice of alternative sites to choose from. Also a new main library must not cut into the funding of our branch libraries. I think all major projects should be subject to voter approval.

Convention center: Before I make my final decision I need to see a clearer cost-benefit analysis. Without the voter approval process I would have been against it. I say, "show me."

Stadium: No. Let the private business sector come up with the funds. All the claims of trickle-down riches from the Super Bowl are a remote illusion to most taxpayers.

Advantage: As a teacher, lawyer, newspaperman and small-business owner, I think I know the problems of people in our district. As a community, environmental and taxpayer advocate, I would bring a long-range vision of a more livable, affordable San Diego for our children and grandchildren.

Vonn Marie May

Cultural resource planner/paralegal

Statement: My candidacy is about the need for open and responsible government. I am a "citizen" candidate coming from the perspective of public trust not political career development. I intend to provide focused and unselfish leadership.

District: Improve city interdepartmental communications, planning and shared capital outlay. Encourage strong community input and monitoring. Hold outside low-bid contractors to higher scrutiny.

Ballpark: If city money, directly or indirectly, is used, the public should

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weigh in. The site should be further east. Putting the ballpark next to the already successful Gaslamp Quarter is a lukewarm gesture for revitalization.

Library: Build it, most definitely! Put it on the ballot -- no! A central library is a basic civic "right," and should not be pitted against "for-profit" projects.

Convention center: Expansion yes, with tourist money -- yes, but what about hidden city costs? What about unmitigated traffic and a six-block-long uninterrupted monolithic wall of a building -- no!

Stadium: Yes, if the ticket guarantee (of the Chargers contract) was reopened. A history of team performance should be part of the discussion.

Advantage: I have a strong advocacy track record of giving voice to issues that have little monied constituency, i.e.: community, culture and the environment. I am concerned if not disillusioned by the lack of civic commitment and the financial irresponsibility our public agencies possess.

Byron Wear

Incumbent

Statement: I will continue to bring common sense to City Hall, responding to the community's basic needs. I pledge clear vision, genuine understanding of the area and accessibility.

District: I will continue the 72-hour pothole repair program; street resurfacing and basic infrastructure repairs remain priorities. I will continue support of \$1.5 million annual allocation to coastal infrastructure fund and \$2.5 million low-flow storm water diversion program to protect our beaches.

Ballpark: I strongly support a downtown ballpark in Centre City East that provides as much benefit as possible to the city with no ticket guarantee, no tax increase and subject to approval by the voters.

Library: I support both a contemporary main library and effective branch libraries as critical components of our system; if voter approval is necessary then so be it.

Convention center: I support it and TOT (hotel-room tax revenue) from hotel visitors is the most appropriate funding source. Our center needs to be competitive nationwide.

Stadium: We should aggressively bid for another (Super Bowl). However, I will not be held hostage to NFL demands -- an additional \$20 million in

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improvements cannot be justified in light of other more pressing needs.

Advantage: My proven council record as a consensus builder has successfully brought diverse groups together to address problems for positive solution and change. My 34 years (of) community activism have given me a keen sense of vision for the physical, social and economic needs of our community.

Michael Zucchet

Educator and economist

Statement: San Diego deserves better from City Hall. I will work to bring much-needed common sense, fiscal responsibility and integrity to our city government.

District: We must stop raiding the General Fund of monies that are meant to go toward city services. We must focus on the priorities of citizens -- streets, infrastructure, public safety, libraries, parks -- rather than the priorities of special interests.

Ballpark: I will work very hard to keep the Padres in San Diego and help them build a new ballpark, but I will not support extensive public financing. The Padres and the private sector must fund the vast majority of costs. It should go to a public vote.

Library: We need a new main library, but we do not need a \$150 million domed monument. Our branch libraries are embarrassing, and we shouldn't be spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a downtown boondoggle until we address those deficiencies.

Convention center: I support the expansion and use of TOT (hotel tax) funds, but the private hoteliers and visitor industry (who will reap huge profits) must also contribute.

Stadium: Yes, within reason. But throwing good money after bad is no solution to the stadium debacle. We hosted a great Super Bowl in 1998; if the NFL isn't satisfied, they lose.

Advantage: I am a second-generation native San Diegan with a background in education economics and environmental management, as well as extensive experience with City Hall. My perspective will be to take much better care of our tax dollars, and to make our children, essential city services, and quality of life our top City Hall priorities.

DISTRICT 4

Jimmie Sober

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Semiretired, volunteer mediator, volunteer Social Security advocate for seniors; part-time school tour coordinator and office administrator.

Statement: I can make a difference. Alienation and name calling do not help our community. I will bring vision, respect for all cultures, and all peoples.

District: Our citizens' tax money cannot provide all of that which is necessary. Other resources must be utilized. Volunteers are one such resource. Businesses and colleges are others.

Ballpark: I am not against it being built downtown, (think of Seattle!) if it can be built so as to not inconvenience the public. Beneficiaries must contribute to its construction. People should have a say in how their money is spent. No sky boxes!

Library: Emphasis must be first placed on improving local community libraries. The council should do the right thing by centrally locating the library, not downtown. The only thing on the ballot should be where it could be located.

Convention center: I support the expansion of the convention center. TOT (hotel-room taxes) must be increased to 12.5 percent with a portion utilized for expansion.

Stadium: The city will get another Super Bowl without major expenditures to the Qualcomm Stadium.

Advantage: My education, consensus-building skills, experience in business, the military and government, as a volunteer and teacher are more varied and comprehensive than the incumbent. Most importantly, I will be a motivator, not a destroyer, and will teach passion and compassion, not preach hate and discontent.

George Stevens

Incumbent :

Statement: I am running for re-election to continue my work to reduce crime, revitalize communities and bring jobs and economic development to the district.

District: I will continue the work we have begun. We have a number of projects -- including a Magic Johnson theater complex, more shopping, more jobs, more public improvements -- that need attention.

Ballpark: I support the downtown sports complex. I believe that a public

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vote is necessary if public funds are used.

Library: The new main library should be built in Centre City East, near City College. The public should vote on the issue.

Convention center: Yes.

Stadium: Yes.

Advantage: As councilman for seven years, I've closed crack houses, enforced the 10 p.m. curfew and cracked down on gangs. We've towed abandoned cars, cleaned up graffiti and organized 25 neighborhood councils. We have new jobs and investment coming into the community. I love my job and want to continue the work we've begun.

DISTRICT 6

James Hart

Maintenance man

Statement: Declined to respond to questions but submitted the following:

In looking upon the many Candidate Questionnaires a strong feeling that something has taken a twist of fate came over me. Many groups including Planned Parenthood, California Prolife, the Christian Coalition, the League of Conservative Voters, the San Diego Labor Council, the Pacific Beach Town Council to name a few, have contacted me.

That the people of an enlightened and educated nation would seek to place an individual that is of a predetermined opinion in a leadership position is perhaps an obstacle to academia. That any individual has seen enough, heard all the facts, learned enough, is in itself an absurdity..

I therefore decline to respond in a manner that would seek to exclude public hearing and preclude additional facts. As our society progresses its needs and priorities change.

J. Bruce Henderson

President, Association of Concerned Taxpayers

Statement: Hard work. Common sense. An independent voice protecting the public purse against wealthy business interests. I'll read the documents, blow the whistle, and craft transactions that benefit all the people.

District: First, we must immediately stop Councilwoman Valerie Stallings' "toilet-to-tap" proposal, where sewage is to be collected from communities

north of District 6, treated, and then put in our drinking water.

Ballpark: We should try to convince the Padres to stay at Qualcomm Stadium. It's convenient. It can handle large crowds and it would mean less pressure to increase ticket prices. Voters must approve any public debt.

Library: We definitely need a new main library, just as we need to expand library operating hours, and to expand our older branch libraries. It should be located where it is convenient for the greatest number of users. All long-term debt should go to the voters.

Convention center: It's important to reject Proposition A June 2. Tourist businesses can afford to finance the expansion. Tourist taxes should fund environmental and cultural projects which benefit tourists, citizens and business.

Stadium: The Super Bowl offers us a chance to renegotiate with the Chargers. Together, we should diligently seek the private funding necessary to attract the Super Bowl to San Diego.

Advantage: When things go wrong, I alert the community and mobilize voters to force government back on track -- no matter the special interests I must oppose or the mud thrown at me.

Valerie Stallings

Incumbent

Statement: As the District 6 representative, I've worked to reverse neighborhood neglect, lower the crime rate and strengthen our economy.

District: We've begun to reverse years of neglect by insisting that City Hall interact with the community where services are needed. From infrastructure improvements to neighborhood policing, this approach is working.

Ballpark: I support the ballpark only if paid for by those who benefit, including the Padres. There must be a public vote, no new or increased taxes, no ticket guarantee, no city responsibility for cost overruns, and no risk to the city General Fund if revenues fall short of projections.

Library: The current plan is far too costly. I continue to support a lower-cost alternative. We must redirect greater resources into upgrading and improving branch libraries.

Convention center: Yes. Expanding the center is like trading a small pie for a larger one. Each TOT (hotel-room tax revenue) slice -- including

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those for neighborhood services -- becomes bigger with a larger pie.

Stadium: No. If the Chargers want major improvements, they should pay for them. I believe the NFL had such a good Super Bowl experience that they will want to return soon.

Advantage: Personal integrity, a fair-minded approach, dedication to meeting the needs of constituents, leadership on important citywide and neighborhood issues, and courage to take tough stands, like my opposition to the Chargers' stadium deal. Unlike my opponent, I do not confuse headline grabbing and political grandstanding with solid leadership and problem-solving.

DISTRICT 8

David Gomez

Rancher

Declined to respond to questionnaire.

Juan Vargas

Incumbent

Statement: It's an honor to serve District 8. But we've just begun. I will continue working for safer streets and stronger, more economically viable communities.

District: I will continue fighting to improve services: increased sweeping, improved lighting, street resurfacing, and to open more neighborhood service centers -- and I will increase the graffiti patrols that I started.

Ballpark: I agree with the San Diego Taxpayers Association that the Padres should make a large investment in any new ballpark. There ought to be a public vote before any city money is utilized.

Library: My first priority is the branch libraries. I support the measure that will finance them and create an endowment. I'm a strong library supporter, but I am not yet convinced that a new main library downtown is essential when we don't have money for libraries in the neighborhoods.

Convention center: Yes. The convention center expansion will attract conventions and bring visitors to San Diego and create 4,000 permanent jobs. It is a good investment for all of us.

Stadium: No. I am in favor of private interests improving the stadium. Qualcomm received a public relations/advertising windfall for their

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participation. Other private entities might benefit from similarly investing in stadium improvements.

Advantage: I've fought gang violence and crime is down -- more than any district in the city. I brought police stations, two fire stations, more parks and better services to the community. I've also brought jobs and economic development. We're heading in the right direction. I want to finish the job.

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(Page B-1)

ELECTION '98 | S.D. COUNCIL | DISTRICT 8

Communities share old complaints

Anthony Millican
STAFF WRITER

28-May-1998 Thursday

San Diego City Council District 8

Navy helicopters whirl overhead. A lot.

Sharon Shields raises her voice to be heard.

"The one thing I got a real problem with is the gang activity," she says, "and the constant speeding on the streets."

As if to make her point, a car peels out at the street corner of her neighborhood in Nestor. The squeal of tires subsides, but not her annoyance. She once requested speed bumps for the area. She's still waiting.

In Logan Heights, Connie Zuniga's voice rises because of simmering anger, not helicopters.

"This is the start of a new era for the community of Logan Heights," Zuniga begins.

Behind her, construction workers are tearing down a former welfare office. A police substation, with community rooms and a parking garage, will take its place at 25th Street and Imperial Avenue.

"We have sent a very clear message downtown that we are on the move," Zuniga continues. "The demolishing of this welfare building is going to help this community tremendously. The police station here has been promised

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to us for 20 years. It has been a very long and difficult road."

If there is a common ground among the residents of Nestor and Logan Heights, it is that they share long-standing complaints against San Diego City Hall.

Both are signature neighborhoods in City Council District 8, which stretches from a part of Golden Hill to communities at the border.

Incumbent Juan Vargas, who lives in Golden Hill, makes a point of regularly talking about the city's indifference to the district, especially toward Logan Heights and adjacent communities.

"There are very few votes here," Vargas says, standing in the parking lot of the former welfare office.

"I think that's why it has always been a dumping ground. No one has cared because the people there don't vote. The people don't vote because they are so poor and they are so frustrated with government."

The median household income in District 8 is \$28,277. Using 1989 dollars as a measuring stick, the district's median household income has dropped 3.4 percent over the last seven years.

Given the Byzantine nature of political boundaries, it is little wonder observers consider the area really two districts in one.

The southern part includes Otay Mesa, Palm City, San Ysidro and part of Nestor. That's where the most frequent voters reside, and on Tuesday, they will determine whether there will be an outright winner or a November runoff for the District 8 seat on the San Diego City Council.

Candidate **David** Gomez, who lives in Nestor, hopes that discontent with City Hall will help him unseat Vargas. Flooding in the Tijuana River Valley is a primary concern, says Gomez, who lost his ranch and livestock to flooding in 1993.

Helicopters from the Navy base in Imperial Beach routinely fly over neighborhoods in the area. Joe Palkovic, a Navy retiree, jokes about the need to install anti-aircraft batteries in Nestor.

The northern part of this district, which includes Shelltown, Barrio Logan and Logan Heights, is considered the symbolic heart of San Diego's Mexican-American community.

Esperanza Ledon's first name means Hope in Spanish. And Ledon's hope is for something more basic than a ballpark or expanded convention center. She wants to walk to stores in Logan Heights with her purse.

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Right now, if she carries her purse at all, she wraps it in a paper bag. Purse snatchings are all too common, Ledon, 49, says in Spanish. She hopes the new police station will make a difference.

Rachel Ortiz, meanwhile, never meant to become an urban planner. She wanted to help youths, especially gang members. And for 28 years she has helped countless kids as executive director of nonprofit Barrio Station.

In the process, she has become something of an expert on the nuances of city zoning ordinances, code enforcement and state redevelopment law.

She had to be. Ortiz knows better than most that a deteriorating community breeds violence.

Today, life in the Barrio is much improved, because of the work of residents, not politicians, she says.

Ortiz has set her sights on improving parking. A lot of businesses don't have sufficient parking for their employees. So they park on neighborhood streets -- to the consternation of residents.

Parking is horrendous, Ortiz says, and zoning and code enforcement are horrible.

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ELECTION '98 | S. D. COUNCIL | DISTRICT 8

Challenger Gomez battling uphill against Vargas

Anthony Millican
STAFF WRITER

28-May-1998 Thursday

David Gomez | Juan Vargas

Flush with hope, **David Gomez** stopped at the San Diego City Clerk's Office for paperwork to run for the District 8 seat on the City Council. He knew the routine well.

In 1993, he took out papers to run for the same seat in a special election. But flooding in the Tijuana River Valley wiped out his ranch, taking him out of the race before it ever really began.

Harvard Law School graduate **Juan Vargas** eventually claimed District 8, winning by just 501 votes.

Vargas made history in becoming the first Latino to win a council seat without first having been appointed. No one ran against him five months later, when Vargas won his first full term.

It would be different this time in 1998, Gomez thought. His rebuilt ranch weathered El Nino-fueled storms. And the campaign would be a family affair with his brother **Armando Gomez** as campaign manager.

Then **Armando Gomez** called with news more sobering than any poll result: their 92-year-old mother had cancer.

Guadalupe Gomez died May 18. But not before she made her close-knit family promise to continue the council campaign, which pits only Gomez against incumbent Vargas in the June 2 primary election.

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Admittedly distracted, **David Gomez** has tried his best. He has distributed campaign fliers, walked neighborhoods and knocked on the doors of those most likely to vote in the election that could force a runoff if no one gets one more than 50 percent of the vote.

As a community activist, Gomez is most known for co-founding Citizens Revolting Against Pollution. The South Bay group successfully lobbied to get a \$100 million sewage treatment plant built near the U.S.-Mexico border.

But that might have been easy compared to the task at hand: unseat a high-profile incumbent who has amassed a campaign war chest of about \$55,000. Gomez has raised about \$3,900, a large chunk of which includes loans to his own campaign.

David vs. Goliath?

The irony isn't lost on Vargas. God and family values were key themes in his failed bid for Congress in 1996, only three years after he won his council seat.

On radio talk shows, at community events and in front of newspaper editorial boards, Vargas has portrayed himself with confidence as a leader in fighting crime.

While the city as a whole has seen a 28 percent drop in crime since he's been in office, District 8 has seen crime rates fall 45 percent -- the largest district drop, Vargas said.

"One of the things that I've done, and I've done this very aggressively, is work with the community to make sure they see the cops as their friends and a part of the community," Vargas said.

Vargas' campaign brochures list two new police stations among his accomplishments: The Southern station at 27th Street and Coronado Avenue in Nestor and the under-construction Central substation at 25th Street and Imperial Avenue in Logan Heights.

While the Southern station "opened" under Vargas, it took Gomez and then-District 8 councilman Bob Filner to get that project approved, Gomez said.

The Central station's ground-breaking ceremony took place May 14, only two weeks prior to the election date. When asked about the timing, Vargas grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

"When I came into office, we had a welfare office there and across the

street you had a liquor store," Vargas said.

"People used to come out of the welfare office with their welfare checks, go across to the liquor store, stand in a huge line to change their checks and come out with booze. They would go around the back, get drunk (and) cause all sorts of problems."

Community members say the Logan Heights station is badly needed.

But Vargas can be overzealous. Last year, he called on the city to defy state law and use police gang records in doing background checks on city workers and those applying for city jobs.

And Vargas' plain spoken demeanor got him into trouble when Sex Club operator Thad Poppell sued Vargas over a statement Vargas made to a reporter for The Los Angeles Times in November 1996. However, Superior Court jurors took two hours to decide Vargas did not slander Poppell.

Gomez has his own public relations worries. He's the guy who started Citizens Revolting Against Pollution, the South Bay group whose acronym prompts snickering.

But that was the point, Gomez said, noting the acronym helped draw attention to the stench and mosquitos driving residents nuts.

"We were more or less under curfew in that community," Gomez said. "When it came time for dusk, you couldn't put the kids outside."

"Back in 1990, it got to a point where you either did something for your life, your community or you just got out of there," Gomez said.

He decided to stick it out and fight.

To Gomez's chagrin, Vargas has refused to debate him. Vargas said debates usually degenerate into mud-slinging, and he has nothing to gain by debating Gomez.

Despite their differences, Gomez, 58, and Vargas, 37, do have some common ground. Both are Democrats. Both favor expansion of the San Diego Convention Center. And both would like to see branch libraries expanded or improved before a new downtown library is built.

"It broke my heart to see that (Logan Heights) library," Gomez said. "It's an old library. The materials there are old. There are no technological facilities there for the kids."

As for a downtown ballpark, Gomez said most of the blue-collar residents in the district would be priced out of the facility and would end up watching

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Padres games on television anyway.

Vargas said most South Bay residents don't see the benefit of a downtown ballpark.

"That is not the case with the people in the northern part of my district. They see this (a ballpark) as a great opportunity," Vargas said. The cost of the facility remains a concern, he added.

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(Page B-1:6,7; B-5:1,4; B-6:3,5; B-8:2)

Treatment ponds planned at border plant

Kathryn Balint
STAFF WRITER

17-Oct-1998 Saturday

The U.S. government announced yesterday that it wants to build a series of sewage-treatment ponds at a border sewage plant to help treat the Mexican wastes that flow across the border.

The decision to build open-air ponds isn't final, but people who live in and around the area are so upset about it that they immediately began calling federal officials to complain.

"It's going to put sewage right back into our community," said **David Gomez**, a Nestor resident.

Gomez founded Citizens Revolting Against Pollution to try to force the U.S. government to clean up the raw Mexican sewage that has flowed across the border and contaminated San Diego's southernmost beaches for more than six decades. His group successfully lobbied for the \$100 million waste water treatment plant that is now located just north of the international border.

Gomez sees the decision to add open-air ponds not as a way to enhance the sewage treatment but as a setback.

"This community here fought because of concerns about mosquitos and odor from sewage," Gomez said. "That's why you have a federal sewage treatment plant here. Now, you're putting sewage right back into the valley and there's a concern again about mosquitos and odors."

The preliminary decision to build ponds is likely to please environmental activists, however. The local chapters of the Sierra Club and the Surfrider Foundation have urged the government for years to consider using ponds to treat the Mexican sewage flows.

The existing sewage treatment plant at the border is designed to provide what is known as primary treatment, in which solid wastes are separated

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from the waste water. Its effluent, however, has consistently failed laboratory tests for acute toxicity.

That means the effluent is so toxic that it kills aquatic life in laboratory tests. Surfactants -- foaming agents in Mexican household detergents -- are the suspected culprits.

Experts believe that providing secondary treatment would solve the problem.

But construction of secondary treatment facilities has been delayed because the U.S. Boundary & Water Commission and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency couldn't agree on what method of secondary treatment to use.

The EPA, which will fund the upgrade of the plant, urged the use of ponds to treat the sewage. The EPA argued that the ponds would be less expensive, quicker to build and better able to handle masses of toxic wastes.

But the Boundary & Water Commission, which will oversee construction of the secondary treatment facilities, wanted to use conventional technology. The commission said treatment ponds are unproven on such a scale -- 25 million gallons a day.

Yesterday, both agencies said they had agreed to use ponds for secondary treatment.

EPA project manager Liz Borowiec said the decision boiled down to cost.

"The No. 1 reason for selecting ponds is that the ponds are \$53 million cheaper," she said.

EPA puts the cost of ponds at \$19 million and the cost of conventional secondary treatment technology at \$72 million.

Plans call for 16 ponds on 30 acres in the Tijuana River Valley. Borowiec said the public is invited to comment on a draft environmental impact statement that is expected to be released early next year.

May 1 is the deadline for the federal government to render a final decision. Construction of the treatment ponds is expected to take three years.

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The San Diego Union-Tribune.

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ELECTION '98

Hopefuls seek end to water district | 3 vow to dissolve agency if they win

Frank Klimko
STAFF WRITER

31-Oct-1998 Saturday

TIJUANA RIVER VALLEY -- A slate of candidates running for election to the Tia Juana River Valley County Water District board wants to liquidate this tiny water authority because it believes the agency has become irrelevant and costly.

The slate -- community activist **David Gomez**, his wife, incumbent **Jeanie Gomez**, and **Martha Alicia Navarrete**, a Nestor resident -- has signed pledges to immediately dissolve the water district.

If all three candidates are successful, they will have a majority on the five-member board.

Talk of doing away with the 52-year-old district has become the dominant theme of this election. Two current board members, and at least one incumbent seeking re-election, reject the notion of closing down operations.

"**David (Gomez)** is a political loose cannon," said water board candidate **Nick Inzunza**. "It is ludicrous for him to talk of getting rid of the district which represents about 15,000 people."

Unlike other county water districts, the Tia Juana district sells no water. It exists to find and develop new water resources in the South Bay, and to advocate on such issues as flood control. With fewer than 6,500 registered voters, the district runs from the border north to Imperial Beach's Ream Field and east to Interstate 5.

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The six candidates for the water board are:

- **David Egger**, 37, who owns a farm and horse ranch and is a former board member who lost a 1996 re-election bid. His grandfather, Robert Egger, a Swiss dairyman, drilled the first documented deep well in the river valley.
- Nestor residents **David Gomez**, 58, of the grass-roots group Citizens Revolting Against Pollution, and his wife, Jeanie Gomez, 43, who was elected to the board in 1996. The couple run a river valley horse ranch. The citizens group was formed in 1990 to combat pollution in the valley and has branched out to community activism.
- Incumbent **Inzunza**, 56, brother of board president Gilbert Inzunza, a school psychologist at Lincoln Acres elementary school. Inzunza was appointed to fill out the unexpired term of Danny R. Marschall, who died in February.
- **Navarrete**, 47, a member of Citizens Revolting Against Pollution.
- Incumbent **Carolyn Powers**, 53, an aide to state Sen. Steve Peace, D-El Cajon. Powers was first elected in 1994.

This is not the first time there has been talk of dissolving the district; it was attempted in 1989 and in 1996.

The Tia Juana water district was on the verge of disbanding in 1989 when a new board majority won office and started generating interest in local water issues.

Officials note that the water board cannot easily disband.

It would have to apply to the Local Agency Formation Commission, which would make a recommendation to the county Board of Supervisors. The supervisors could approve the recommendation or order a districtwide vote.

David Gomez said the water authority's time has passed.

"It was a good water district when it was used by farmers to protect the water in the valley," Gomez said. "They are not doing that anymore. The board needs to look into reality and stop using taxpayer money."

The two other candidates on the slate, **Navarrete** and **Jeanie Gomez**, agree.

Members of the dissolution slate also are critical of the district's \$50 per property annual assessment. **Navarrete** said, "The most aggravating thing is that they are taking taxes out of our property."

Incumbent Nick Inzunza said he believes people in the area "need a voice, someone to speak up for us," on issues such as placing large sewage treatment ponds in the valley.

"We in the valley don't want ponding, and we have taken that position," Inzunza said. "Ponding is an example of how a larger jurisdiction can impose their will on the river valley. And, we feel we are imposed upon."

The water board has been successful on several fronts, he said. It has been an advocate for flood control measures. And it has found new water resources.

The district tested to depths of about 1,000 feet and found that there is a limited amount of available drinking water at that depth, according to district consultants. The quality of water is excellent and requires very little treatment to meet drinking water standards. It remains to be seen, however, whether the district can economically convert the deep well water into drinking water.

Powers, a civic activist concerned with water issues, said she is proud of her four years in office and of the board's efforts to find new water resources.

She is critical of the amount of money the board is spending but is against disbanding the district.

"I don't see that we would benefit from the county taking over the leadership" in the river valley, she said.

David Egger is against making a hasty decision.

"I want to reduce expenses, pay down the debt and then we need to figure out if there is any need for this water district," Egger said. "I've had a lifetime of experience dealing with water quality, wells and sewage flows."

The Tijuana River Valley is probably best known in the region for border crossing attempts by undocumented immigrants, an occasional flood and waves of raw sewage that foul the county's southernmost beaches.

But water officials say the valley is also one of the few remaining wetlands in the United States and has a rich agricultural heritage that must be protected.

Once the Tijuana Valley area was as lush and green as a golf course, where farmers grew vegetables, dug wells and irrigated their land with ground water.

In the 1950s, about 80 percent of it was farmed, but in the 1960s, salt

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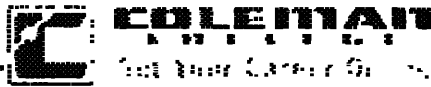
water and sewage from Tijuana began contaminating the water table and ruined wells.

Finally, after the 1980 flood, which did millions of dollars in crop damage, many farmers relocated. The few farmers who remain in the valley today use private wells that have not been contaminated or buy water from San Diego, which is expensive.

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(Page B-15:7,8; B-13:1)

Letters to the Editor

Reach council with e-mail? You've got to be kidding | Vargas' third term violates city charter | Cities need bold steps to fight alcohol problems

04-Feb-1999 Thursday

Reach council with e-mail? You've got to be kidding

Re: "Mayor Golding and council members, you've got mail" (B-1, Jan. 28):

I had to laugh when I read Ray Huard's article on communicating with the City Council by e-mail. I have spent too many hours in the council chambers to believe that e-mail will get any more attention than people who speak to the council.

For instance, on Jan. 4, the council considered sewer rate increases. **David Schlesinger**, director of the Water Department, spoke for about 10 minutes on the need for the increase. I watched the council while he was speaking. The mayor chatted with the city attorney. The council members talked to each other, talked on the phone, walked about the dais. No one heard a word Schlesinger said.

This council is frequently tacitly rude to speakers. If members are not interested, they display it openly, disregarding the fact that people who employ them have sat for an hour or more waiting for an opportunity to speak.

Most of the council members do not respond to mail, particularly if the writer does not reside in their district. Our own council member does not answer our letters, even if we don't use big words. Will he answer, or even read e-mail? Ha!

CATHERINE A. STROHLEIN
San Diego

21.04.403.1731

Your story did more than capture my eye; it virtually had me jumping with joy. Well, at first anyway. "What great news!" I thought. "I finally have a voice in our city's decision-making process while it happens."

But, alas, reading on shattered my dream. The only way I would be able to participate in the new e-mail system (the article said), was to have access to the mayor's and council members' web site. To do that, my computer would need full service Internet capabilities, and since I'm contracted with my ISP (Internet Service Provider) to carry e-mail only, the World Wide Web's https are beyond my modem's reach.

Too bad, though. It would have been nice to be in our council's chambers, sitting beside someone deciding the fate of our city and its residents. For myself and those like me, I guess it's back to the after-the-fact e-mail address of mayor@sdmayor.sannet.gov. Unless, that is, our mayor and council have realized that there are thousands in this city who share my problem.

PAUL R. NIELSEN
North Park

Vargas' third term violates city charter

Re: "Challenge of Vargas' re-election dismissed" (B-Section, Jan. 22):

Your article about San Diego City Councilman Juan Vargas stated he "was first elected to the council in a special election in September 1993 to fill the unexpired term of Councilman Bob Filner." The correct date of the special election was Feb. 16, 1993, seven months earlier.

Vargas then was re-elected on Sept. 21, 1993, Sept. 19, 1995, and June 2, 1998. The city charter allows but two terms to be served. It appears that neither the city of San Diego, Vargas or the Union-Tribune can count past two.

I find it more disturbing that taxpayer money is being used to defend Vargas. What's hard to understand about one, two, out ?

DERRICK W. ROACH
Chula Vista

As a past City Council candidate who ran against Vargas last June, I lost and accepted the results. But the lawsuit has brought Vargas' blunder to light; it revealed that he is currently serving his third term, which is in violation of the city charter.

Had I known the specifics of Vargas' past, I would have raised this issue and had him declared an ineligible candidate.

DAVID GOMEZ

21 04 40 13 17 32

San Diego

Cities need bold steps to fight alcohol problems

Re: "National City wages battle with the bottle," (B-Section, Jan. 27):

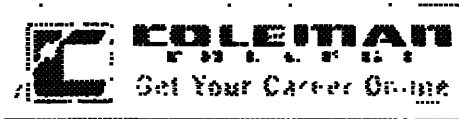
Your article describing the National City Police Department's new project to manage alcohol problems was encouraging. In correctly linking alcohol to much of the crime and violence in any community, Sgt. Lanny Roark is hitting the nail on its head. If successful, his multifaceted approach for improving safety in National City should become a model for all of San Diego.

County-wide problems of underage drinking, gang-related violence and drunken driving demand that communities take bold steps in alcohol law enforcement and public policy. Roark and his neighborhood policing team's action plan is embraced by the San Diego County Policy Panel on Youth Access to Alcohol. The panel's report on youth drinking calls for many of the measures getting under way in National City.

The National City Police Department's alcohol initiative is commendable. Now the community needs to join forces with law enforcement and city officials to make it work.

RAY DiCICCIO, executive director
Policy Panel on Youth Access to Alcohol
San Diego

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The San Diego Union-Tribune.

(Page B-3:1,6; B-6:2,3,4,5)

Mexico sewage outfall tunnel is now in use

UNION-TRIBUNE

15-Jan-1999 Friday

IMPERIAL BEACH -- Twelve million gallons a day of treated Mexican sewage began flowing through a new \$160 million undersea tunnel and into the ocean more than three miles off the coast here Wednesday night.

The tunnel was built to discharge Mexican sewage that is cleansed at a new \$100 million treatment plant at the international border.

The tunnel and treatment plant were built to prevent raw sewage from flowing into San Diego from Mexico. The facilities were paid for largely with money from the U.S. government. Mexico has agreed to pay \$16 million and to dispose of sewage sludge that is generated at the plant.

After six decades of living with the smell and contamination from the sewage flows, people who live in Imperial Beach and the Tijuana River Valley celebrated the opening of the sewage outfall.

"It's fantastic," said David Gomez, who owns a farm in the valley and who lives in nearby Nestor.

But not everyone is happy.

Environmental activists, including those from the Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation, fear that the treated sewage -- which fails federal toxicity standards -- will pose a risk to ocean life.

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The San Diego Union-Tribune.

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Mexican sewage flows across border

UNION-TRIBUNE

10-Jan-1999 Sunday

Millions of gallons of raw Mexican sewage flowed across the border yesterday, contaminating the Tijuana River Valley in San Diego.

Officials were unavailable for comment, and it was not clear what caused the flow.

Carolyn Powers, who lives in the valley, and **David Gomez**, who owns a farm there and lives nearby, said the spill was the largest in months.

Gomez estimated that more than 5 million gallons flowed through the valley yesterday. He said the spill began Friday afternoon and was continuing last night.

"We'd like to rid ourselves of this sewage in the valley," said Gomez, who sits on the board of directors of the Tia Juana County Valley Water District.

A new \$100 million sewage-treatment plant and a \$160 million undersea disposal tunnel were expected to begin working Friday. But, according to Ron Kole, spokesman for the city of San Diego's Metropolitan Wastewater Department, the operation was delayed because of technical problems.

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