

Water officials working with Senator Wilk to amend SB634

By JIM HOLT - April 13, 2017, 5:18 pm



Water heads are working closely with Senator Scott Wilk on amendments to his bill which calls for a brand new all-encompassing water district that explain the role of both Valencia Water Company and the commissioners mandated by the state to seal such deals.

Members of the Castaic Lake Water Agency board were updated Wednesday night by the agency's attorney on the status of Senate Bill 634 which details the formation of the Santa Clarita Valley Water District.

Joseph Byrne, general counsel lawyer for the CLWA, told the board that the bill is still being amended to reflect the agency's goals.

“I should emphasize that this is Senator Wilk’s bill, any decisions about amendments and whatnot will be his,” he said. “So, we are in a support role with him.”

The bill is scheduled for hearing by the Senate Governance and Finance Committee on Apr. 26.

Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water who heard the bill last month said they found scant reference to the Valencia Water Company.

On Wednesday, the agency’s attorney told the board that language amended in the bill pertaining to the Valencia Water Company was something being worked on collaboratively between the senator and water officials.

“One of things that was touched on by the committee, something the committee expressed a strong desire to have your clear language on was the Valencia Water company.

“So, we’ve been talking to the Senator’s office and committee staff about what amendments we can make for changes to express more of a clear indication that once the new entity is formed that it will take action together with the Valencia Water company to bring them together.

The other subject committee members want to see addressed more clearly in the bill was language detailing the role of Los Angeles Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO).

It is LAFCO’s state-mandated job, in part, to oversee changes to local government boundaries that involve the formation and expansion of cities and special districts, as well as the merger of special districts.

Commissioners mandated to rule on annexations and mergers in Los Angeles County voted unanimously Wednesday to oppose a senate bill calling for one all-encompassing water district until it is amended to include them.

Byrne then told the board that committee members want the same sort of clarity in the bill dealing with LAFCO’s role.

“Another area that was raised at the committee about which we’ve been talking to a variety of people about was the involvement of LAFCO ,” he said. “That’s something we’ve spoken to the senator’s office about.”

“We have been talking with L.A. LAFCO and the senator’s office about the appropriate role for LAFCO,” Byrne said.

Matt Stone, the agency’s general manager, told The Signal Thursday that he and other water officials have been “working on reaching these goals” and “working to resolve these issues.”

The proposed Santa Clarita Valley Water District described in Senator Scott Wilk’s SB 634 would include SCV’s water wholesaler, the Castaic Lake Water Agency and its four local water retailers – the Newhall County Water District, the Santa Clarita Water Division and the Valencia Water Company.

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