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## Land Swap for New EBMUD Pumping Plant

By Cathy Tyson



Proposed pumping plant at the corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Mt. Diablo Court Image provided

site has a fair market value of \$226,500. The goal of the land swap is a non-cash exchange, so the price difference called for other items to even out the trade.

Because the parcel the city wants to buy is smaller and worth less, the city will be contracting with EBMUD for additional work, such as relocating a substantial storm drain along with over \$100,000 worth of paving, lighting, and landscaping. The bottom line is that both entities pay each other the same amount, making the transaction equivalent.

Design Review Commissioners recently approved plans for the new 1,935 square foot pumping plant that is set back from the corner in front of Blodgett's. Looking a bit like a non-descript garage, it was a challenge to find a balance that seems slightly residential but also utilitarian on a lot with a cemetery next door. A sidewalk will be installed, along with landscaping, a meandering path, an architectural fence, louvers on the windows and gated access for service vehicles.

At the Jan. 14 city council meeting where the land swap agreement was finalized, the biggest concerns were about the construction phase, with both Larry Blodgett and the owner of Minute Man press worried about access for their customers, along with carpet and paper deliveries during the project. They were assured that there will be a lane available in either direction on Mt. Diablo Boulevard during the entire process, and work hours will run from 8 a. m. to 8 p.m. to expedite the job.

The vintage Diablo Vista pumping plant dating from 1954 that serves almost all of Lafayette, pumping approximately 12 million gallons of water per day, is rapidly nearing the end of its lifespan. EBMUD and the City of Lafayette have been working on plans to do a land swap that trades the parcel with the existing aging plant-which, when demolished can eventually become a city-owned parking lot-for a larger vacant parcel on which a new plant can be built. The wrinkle in this equation is the parcels aren't of equal value, although both parties, the City of Lafayette and EBMUD, wanted to make it an even exchange.

The swap is a good deal for both parties. The vacant city-owned right-of-way parcel in front of Blodgett's at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Mt. Diablo Court makes sense for a new plant: it's near existing underground pipes and is easily accessible for construction. The unremarkable shed-like old pumping plant lot, next to the Ace Hardware store also on Mt. Diablo Boulevard is strategically located to help relieve congested parking in the area.

The city and EBMUD had both parcels professionally appraised and agree with their current valuations: the larger site near Blodgett's coming in at \$394,200 while the smaller

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