

Recycled-water plan approved

City Council decision leaves just about everybody happy

By Suzanne Zalev, STAFF WRITER

REDWOOD CITY -- World peace may be elusive, but the battle over recycled water in Redwood City is over.

The City Council on Monday approved a recycled-water plan that got a thumbs-up from just about everybody. The city will achieve its goal of saving 2,000 acre feet a year of potable water. The Redwood Shores group that opposed the project is happy, because recycled water won't be used in places where children play. And the cost of the new plan is only \$14,000 more than the original proposal.

Looking back over the last two years, "Safewater Coalition started with a war," co-founder Christina Lai said. "Today, we trust each other."

This wasn't the only war reference at Monday's meeting. Engineer Chu Chang used a picture of a medieval army to illustrate the first meeting of the task force that came up with the solution. The group, which consisted of nine members who believed recycled water was safe for irrigation anywhere, nine who didn't, and two "neutral" members, unanimously approved the recommendation last month -- which Chang illustrated with a photo of a celebratory fireworks display.

The task force's success shows "community does work," Mayor Jeff Ira said.

"That's the whole point of everything," he said. Vice Mayor Barbara Pierce said it's a reminder that people from different neighborhoods with different points of view can arrive at an answer that didn't seem apparent.

"I'm very proud that I belong in this community," she said.

The new plan realigns some pipes, and the money saved will pay for several playing fields to be resurfaced with artificial turf. It also includes new conservation incentives and a dual plumbing system at the downtown cinema, and factors in existing groundwater use at Sequoia High School.

The only opposition Monday night came from frequent council critic Rudy Luca, who questioned whether the estimated \$4.7 million cost to resurface playing fields in four parks was accurate. He also said he's concerned it could cause more injuries to athletes.

Gary Hover, parks and facilities division superintendent, said the surface isn't the AstroTurf of 15 years ago. Natural turf, which was installed last year at Hoover Field, seems to be safer than natural grass, he said, and it's on top of layers of sand and rubber, not a hard surface like concrete.

City staff will work out a plan to implement the recommendations, and the council will discuss the cinema plumbing next month.

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