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## EBMUD starts moving trench soil after slight delay

By Sora O'Doherty



Trucks drive through the intersection of Bear Creek Road and Camino Pablo. Photo Sora O'Doherty

about the impact of the extremely heavy trucks traversing Bear Creek Road and Camino Pablo at a rate of 17 loads per hour, 130 trucks per day, but especially about this unusual traffic going right by the entrance to and exit from Wagner Ranch Elementary School, and the impact of the morning commute plus school traffic.

Matula indicated that the trench soils may be transported instead to a project at Altamonte, and the council wanted to know if the same urgency applied. After the meeting, EBMUD Community Affairs Representative Reyna Yagi confirmed that the project did not start as planned, but began only on Tuesday, April 24 and that the soil is being taken to Altamont landfill and resource recovery facility in Livermore, which is not a reuse site. EBMUD is still in discussion with Oyster Bay, which is preferred because it is a reuse site.

The city council expressed surprise that the job was being rushed through, even though EBMUD had not finalized the destination of the soil. Matula and Chan explained that the Briones site has been used since the 1960s to house excess soil that accrues from each time EBMUD lays a pipeline. The last time the soil was removed was in 2003, 15 years ago. Now EBMUD is concerned about the soil going through any further storms, as potentially damaging to Orinda and to the Briones reservoir. When asked why the soil had not been removed before the site was so close to its capacity, EBMUD responded that they didn't want to use trucks inefficiently, as would happen if the trucks were not full. They now anticipate that it will require 130 trucks a day for at least six months to empty the site.

The council expressed concerns that EBMUD was still not communicating properly with the city, that there was no real dialog on matters that the city considers extremely important. Vice Mayor Inga Miller accused EBMUD of planning the operation "under a cloak of darkness," even after Young had promised, following the Orchard Road incident last summer, that this wouldn't happen again. EBMUD responded that because they were not digging up pipes or closing streets, they hadn't considered that the project would have a great impact on Orinda. They promised to do better in the future.

Council Member Darlene Gee said that EBMUD's lack of sensitivity to the school issue was "really disconcerting."

"EBMUD has a lot to prove to Orinda," Gee concluded. "I hope you are not being disingenuous." Council Member Dean Orr said that he was not optimistic that EBMUD would make changes responsive to the situation, but urged them to be open to changing their plans if the situation warrants.

Young stated that Orinda is the "heart" of EBMUD, where they have their treatment plant that serves two-thirds of its customers. She added that there will also be more pipe replacements because Orinda needs them for fire safety, but conceded that they had underestimated the impact of the current project. She promised even more communication and the presence of staff at Wagner Ranch and Sleepy Hollow during the project.

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[back](#)

