

**NEWS****David slays Goliath Conservation District wins**[Print Page](#)

Published: Thursday, July 16, 2009 7:21 PM CDT

The San Bernardino Valley Conservation District finally won its long-running battle with the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District and the Local Agency Formation Commission Wednesday in a 3-hour free-for-all at San Bernardino City Hall.

LAFCO had proposed that the Conservation District be consolidated with the Valley District in a move to improve efficiency and possibly save taxpayer dollars.

On a 4-3 vote, the LAFCO Board of Directors decided against the consolidation.

The meeting led off with a one-hour presentation by LAFCO staff outlining reasons the consolidation should be approved.

That was followed by facts and opinions expressed by both sides.

Those favoring the Conservation District said not only would consolidation not save money, but would be even more expensive, adding it would relieve Riverside water users from paying the pump tax, but also would put that additional burden on San Bernardino taxpayers.

A resolution of the issue will also save both agencies and LAFCO thousands of dollars in attorney fees, public relations costs and staff time in generating pounds of paperwork.

Highland Mayor Pro Tem Ross Jones testified that keeping the Conservation District would retain local control.

Former Mayor Dennis Johnson pointed out the relief to Riverside County and the added cost to San Bernardino County if the consolidation went through and the pump tax is deleted.

Commissioner Larry McCallon, also a city councilman for Highland, said, "I can't see any cost savings (in consolidation). About 11 percent of my tax bill already goes to Muni (Valley District). ... (Consolidation is) incompatible with one district saving water and the other selling water. ... I'm also concerned about the loss of local control, Once you've lost it, it's gone forever.

Commissioner Neil Derry, county supervisor for the Third District, observed, "I don't see any benefit to customers. Having a big agency take over a little agency would probably lead to less accountability."

With that, Derry moved to oppose consolidation and the motion passed on a 4-3 vote.

Copyright © 2009 - Highland News

[\[x\] Close Window](#)